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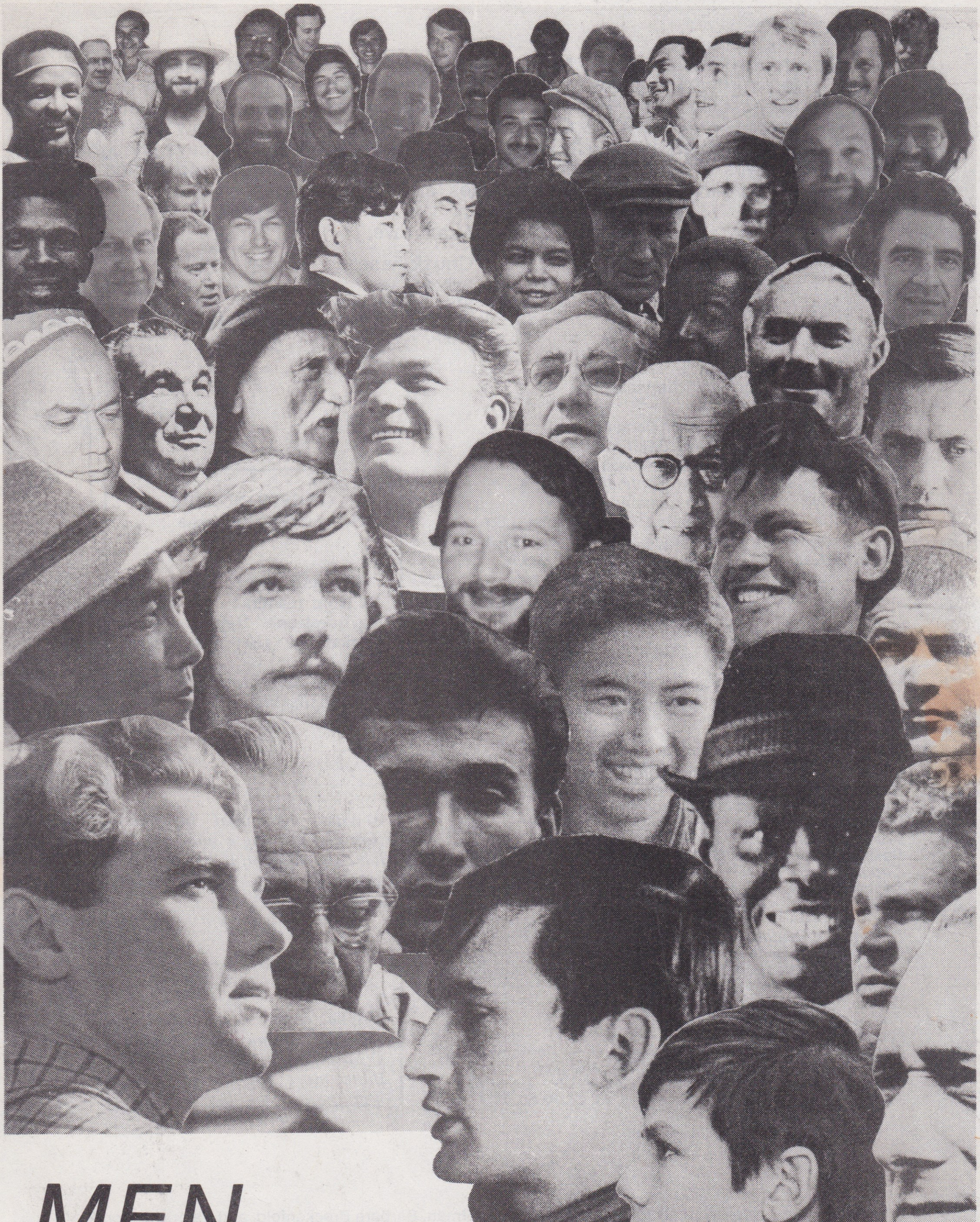

MEN

No. 2

Welcome to the second issue of **Men**. It has been a long time coming, but I think you will find it well worth it. In the past period of time, men have been exploring many of the issues that face us, but still few are writing about their experiences with other men at work, being a black man in the U.S.A., how they have interrupted sexism, how they have created elegant relationships with women and other men, how they have thought about their fathers or their sons, etc. We want to hear from you. Your experience is important. Send your thoughts, poems, articles, and art work to me.

Much love,

Chuck Esser
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QUESTIONNAIRE
for the next issue

I would appreciate responses from readers to the following questions. Replies will be carried in the next issue.

1) What do you most enjoy about being male?

2) What additional information about being a man would have been helpful to you in growing from boyhood to manhood?

3) What changes are needed in the RC Communities and the atmosphere in them to make them more inviting to men?

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Draft Policy for Men's Re-emergence

- **Men are the adult males of the human race. They tend to be physically larger than female humans or younger-than-adult humans, although all three categories overlap in this characteristic.**

- **Men are human beings in every respect. Just as all other human beings, they are essentially highly intelligent, good, caring, kind, and cooperative. Any appearances to the contrary are the results of distress patterns which they have acquired, sometimes by accident or by unique circumstances, more often by systematically installed hurts which are part of the conditioning which society places upon them to prepare them for the rigid roles which the society attempts to enforce upon them.**

- **Men are not inherently oppressive. They have been required, in almost all societies today, to play the role of agents of oppression, but they have been gotten to do so only by first being systematically hurt in a series of oppressive experiences and then enforced and encouraged to rehearse the distress pattern in the oppressor role towards others.**

- **All men are oppressed *but not as men.* It is, of course, damaging and distressing to function in an oppressor role. One must be in a distress pattern and be enforced by it before one will play the role of oppressor, no less than one must be in a distress pattern in order to accept the role of being oppressed. Men are oppressed for their youth, for their age, for their size, for their *ability to work hard.* They are oppressed for being members of ethnic or racial minorities. They are oppressed overwhelmingly as wageworkers or other productive members of society whose production is taken from them by the owning members of society. They are oppressed for their appearance and in many other ways.**

- **Men are not oppressed as men in present societies, though they have been in some of the societies of the past in which women were the dominant sex. In the present society they are conditioned and forced and expected to function in the role of oppressor toward women or children and also toward any other men who can somehow be separated from them and be categorized as a group to be oppressed.**

- **As women begin to become conscious of liberation, and to reclaim their power, it is inevitable that a mistaken policy will be put forward, on occasion and among some women, of "getting even" with men for the oppression women have suffered from them, of "making the men feel guilty," of seeking their own safety and independence and support as counterposed to that of men. There will be a pull upon men who become aware of their having filled oppressor roles in the past, in a mistaken attempt to be rational, to accept the role of guilt and apology and be guided by such mistaken policies advanced by part of the women's liberation movement. This phenomena is analagous to whites being manipulated by their guilt by blacks who are following an incorrect liberation policy that does not lead to black-white unity.**

- **It is crucial that as men and women seek to emerge from the stereotyped roles that society has put upon them that they actually emerge from these roles fully instead of settling for exchanging stereotypes. It is crucial that women not give up the human characteristics which society has permitted them to retain . . . the ability to discharge, the ability to support, to be warm, to be cooperative, patient, enduring, and instead assume some of the masculine stereotypes such as harshness, irresponsibility, and autocratic attitudes. Women's goal must be to be fully human. It is equally important that men seeking to emerge from their stereotyped roles do not give up on the independence, initiative, responsibility, strength and courage, which they theoretically have been encouraged to retain in their roles as men, in their attempt to give up the male chauvinism attitudes. In throwing off their sexist oppression of women, they should not at the same time give up their strength and courage.**

continued . . .

continued . . .

- For men out of guilt to accept a "me, too" and merely supportive role in relation to the liberation efforts of other sections of the population would be a real mistake. It is correct for men to feel pride in themselves as men and it is correct for men to take the lead in general liberation. Men can be the best and strongest allies of any oppressed group. They can play a decisive role in assisting the liberation of every other oppressed group, precisely because they have been left by their role as agents of oppression in a position where they can be very effective agents of liberation by clearly switching sides. Men need to recover their interfered-with ability to discharge, their ability to be tender and gentle and patient without giving up the "manly" virtues which have been permitted them in the past.

- Men need to work on the great oppression categories of our present society, to thoroughly use the three-step technique to discharge on white racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, adultism, etc. Men need to work in groups and pairs on recovering their full ability to discharge by reviewing and discharging on all the incidents connected with inhibiting discharge. Men need to work on reclaiming their full power, not the caricature of power which has been allowed them in their oppressor roles.

- Many men have already moved in that direction of becoming strong leaders and supporters of general liberation. The principle obstacle to all men moving in this direction is exactly the fear and timidity which has been enforced on them during their period of vulnerability as small children. This conditioning was done to prepare them to be oppressed and to act as oppressors. The recovery of power is a crucial issue before every male human.

- The present growth in men's workshops and men's support groups augers well for the future of men in R.C. Women have dominated the leadership of Re-evaluation Counseling in early years and correctly so, but it will strengthen the community, the women, and the men for men to emerge into more leadership and to establish powerful cooperative relationships with each other and with women in leading the community.

- A correct policy and its intelligent application decides everything. This policy for men will bring rich dividends for everyone's re-emergence.

—Harvey Jackins

Charlie Kreiner
International Men's Liberation
Reference Person

Chuck Esser
Editor, *Men*

YO SOY UN HOMBRE

I am a man.
I am *all* man.
Every cell in my body is male.

I grow hair on my face
  and on my chest
  and up to my navel.

I have male muscles, a deep voice,
  enormous potential, initiative, and strength.

I have great intelligence and courage.

I was a boy before I became a man.
I was completely male then, too.

It was great to be a boy.

It is great to be a man.

It is great to be a man in company
  and alliance with other men.

It is great to be a man
  sharing humanness and power
  with young people and women.

I am a strong ally of other men,
  of women, and of young people.

I despise oppression and injustice.

I am an eager champion for the
  liberation of every human.

I rejoice in this, my universe,
  and in my leadership in it.

Call on my strength. Call on my courage.
Call on my intelligence and confidence.
I will respond.

Rejoice with me, male comrades, female comrades.
This is our universe.

I am a man.

—Harvey Jackins

RESPONSES TO THE DRAFT POLICY

Dear Harvey,

I got MEN a few days ago and read your draft policy for men's re-emergence. I am excited that you and several others have started working on it, because I think it will provide a valuable guideline and beacon of correctness for men in RC.

I'd like to share with you some of my thoughts about your draft.

It might be useful to use the word "males" instead of "men" for a similar reason to the one females decided upon -- it includes males of all ages, thus including young people and including those hurts adult males received as young males.

It might be better to use "we," "us" and "our" instead of "they," "their" and "them" because you are male, and because it indicates more solidarity.

I wished it was a little better organized, which would make it clearer. Paragraph 4 could deal with "males are oppressed." Paragraph 5 could deal with "males are not oppressed as males." Paragraph 6 could deal with "males are hurt as males."

This way, from your paragraph 4 you would omit the second and third sentences, and it would basically address all the "isms." By "for their size" do you mean looksism? (Sizism?!) By "their ability to work hard" do you mean classism?

Paragraph 5 could then address "men are not oppressed as men." A definition of oppression could be included as part of the explanation of this statement. That there have been a few societies run by women seems unimportant in making this point. You could put the last sentence of your paragraph into the next paragraph (of my proposal) since it deals with how men are hurt.

This would be a paragraph on the special ways that males ARE hurt as males. It is damaging and distressing to be forced into an oppressor role. Some of men's shared hurts which they can discharge together, with each other's support, are the expectations put on them -- to be agressive, competitive, constantly strong and constantly decisive -- and the limitations put on them -- not to feel, not to discharge, not to be soft and gentle, not to be physically affectionate, not to be nurturing.

Paragraph 6 seems to me to have some painful emotion in it. I hadn't realized the extent to which men have felt guilty and the extent to which that guilt allows them to let themselves be hurt by women. My own rewriting of this paragraph would be:

> "As men listen to women counsel on sexism and give information on their oppression, men will become aware of their having filled oppressor roles, and they may feel guilty. Guilt is a painful emotion to be discharged and not acted upon. It is essential to remember that men would never have acted oppressive had they not been hurtfully pushed into it. It is important to keep our pride in our maleness and our humanness, and to separate our patterns from our persons. In this way we will clearly not accept separatism as rational."

To paragraph 7 I thought of adding that males are inherently loving, nurturing, and supportive. "They (we) need to regain (our) abilities to parent and to homemake. We naturally respect and take equal responsibility for these essential human activities."

I would also like to see a paragraph on homophobia. Men need to regain their ability to support, nurture, touch, and comfort each other. They need to discharge homophobia that keeps them dependent on women for support and keeps them apart from loving each other. Heterosexual men need to discharge their feelings about Gay men to be able to regain their natural joy in physical closeness with men, to end oppression of Gay men, and to discharge feelings that traditionally "feminine" qualities are less valid. As long as Gay men are oppressed, all men will not be able to be fully human.

continued . . .

continued . . .

I like your frequent mention of inhibited discharge as one way that males have been hurt by the oppressive role. I'd like to see you devote a whole paragraph to this, consolidating all the other statements about it.

Paragraph 8 makes a very good point, and it needs to be clearer. Men typically hold authoritarian positions in society's power structures, and their actions and words are typically respected, so men can be especially effective in interrupting oppression.

Paragraph 9 could start out with more emphasis on WHY men need to interrupt oppression:

> "Our re-emergence as men depends on the re-emergence of women. Until they regain their full power, we will not have our full power. Therefore, it is essential that we discharge our sexism and also discharge so that we can interrupt sexism in the world and become complete allies to women. Men and women have more in common as human beings than differences. As long as any oppression exists, we will not be fully human. Therefore, we must discharge our own, and interrupt in others, classism, racism, adultism, anti-Semitism, etc. and become complete allies to every group."

Working on sexuality will clear up areas of distress around maleness. Males have been hurt by expectations and limitations put on them because of their biology. Men need to share these hurts and discharge them together. This way they will recover occluded parts of their humanness.

One minor point is the spelling of "women's" (paragraph 7)!

I have glanced through the rest of the issue, and I am proud to hand out MEN to men in my class. Thank you!

Sincerely yours,
Susan T. Miller

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT POLICY

The Draft Policy for Men's Re-emergence begins on just the right note, reaffirmation of men as human beings. We are not oppressive by our inherent nature, but only as the result of hurtful experiences in our own pasts. We can take pride in ourselves as men. This truth underlies the opening paragraphs, and could well be made more explicit.

There is a questionable phrase in the opening of the fifth paragraph. There is considerable evidence that woman-centered religion pre-dates male-centered. There is some evidence that earlier societies were not male-dominated in the way that all current societies seem to be. However, there is not much suggestion that previous societies were female-dominated in the same way that current societies are male-dominated. In particular, oppression comes into being with class societies. The earliest form of class societies are slave societies. It is not clear that "matriarchal" societies, if they existed prior to class societies, would be oppressive of men.

The sections which criticize mistaken ideas of the women's movements are misplaced. They do not belong in a policy on men's re-emergence. The parts of the paragraph dealing with men can stand by themselves. The section on preserving "manly virtues" is especially appropriate.

As an addition to the section on men as allies for all oppressed groups, talking about the role of men helping to model joy and pride ("It's great to be female!") would be helpful.

Bob Shurtleff
San Francisco, California, USA

SOME COMMENTS ON THE NEED FOR A POLICY

—Chuck Esser

WHY A POLICY?

A policy for men is a statement of reality, of where we are and where we are going. Men need a policy to overcome all limitations and rigidities that have been placed on them by the society, to understand themselves and to understand their key role in the liberation of all people. The intelligent application of a policy for men will be decisive in the speed at which the human race emerges from all limitations put on it.

PRESENT SITUATION

We are almost half the world's population. We are richly diverse and span every culture, race and religion. We belong together as a group of brothers to share our triumphs, solve our common difficulties and join in alliance to see that all people can experience full humanness.

HUMAN ASSUMPTIONS

Men are the male human beings of the human race. Every human quality can be found in us; we are naturally intelligent, physically beautiful, good, caring, loving, kind, cooperative, thoughtful, warm and courageous.

ROLE DEVELOPMENT

From early in a boy's life he is trained into a societally defined "male role." This role includes many positive human qualities. Most men are encouraged to retain their ability to set aside feelings in order to be able to act decisively and courageously, to stay strong, to act with confidence, to take initiative and responsibility. The requirement to take on that role has been accompanied by restricted development of other natural human qualities -- the ability to nurture, to be patient and cooperative, to admit weakness, and to be close to others. All of these qualities are retrievable.

A damaging and cruel part of the "role" forced upon boys and men is that they are forced into being and expected to be oppressive to others, especially to girls and women.

OPPRESSION

Nature of Oppression

Oppression is the systematic, enforced by society, mistreatment of a group of people as members of that group. It continues and is passed on only because, after enough mistreatment, people accept the victim role as less painful than the struggle against it. But everyone who has been oppressed is pulled to get rid of the horrible feelings that it causes. One way people attempt to get out of the victim role is by reversing the roles, by dumping and/or asserting "power" over someone who appears to be weaker or at a disadvantage -- even though acting in the role of oppressor ends up hurting just as much. A new group or generation is oppressed in this process and the pattern is passed on.

All Men Have Been Oppressed

Men have been oppressed in every conceivable way. Every boy is oppressed as a young person. Men have been oppressed as older people, as members of racial, ethnic or religious minorities, as workers, as Gays, as physically different people. In addition, men are oppressed in some

male-specific ways by the society as a whole in the expectation that they operate at all times within the rigidities of the "male" role.

Men Forced Into Oppressor Role

Men have been trained to channel this impulse to hurt others in response to being hurt, against groups which have been awarded less power in society, in particular, women. We call this sexism. (While part of the oppression of young boys comes at the hands of their mothers, and while many individual women do hurtful things to individual men, women as a group to not enforce a systematic invalidation and mistreatment of men.) Sexism is reinforced by institutions of Gay oppression and homophobia. Men are encouraged to stereotype as "woman-like" men who are affectionate and caring about each other, and, out of their own fear of being that way, cut off and put down men who act in any way outside the "male" role.

Ending Oppression

If men are oppressed as children, as minorities, as workers, they will tend to do the same to women, who in turn are likely to oppress children and other less powerful groups. To stop the mistreatment that leads men to oppress others, we must join all oppressed groups as allies to break the cycle of oppression and use our united strength to alter the structures in society from which it springs.

LIMITS AND THEIR REMOVAL

Men have been expected to act cooly and decisively no matter how they feel. Affectionate behavior and open display of feelings have been treated as "weakness" in men, bringing humiliation and shame. This has caused many men to act in isolation and through a great numbness. The cost is high: men grow out of touch with their own feelings and with people who are different from them. (The only way anyone could oppress another human being is by becoming numb to their struggle.) No man has become numb willingly. Each is eager to get through this barrier to real pride and confidence. We can observe and feel the ways people different from ourselves are treated wrongly. We have the tools in RC to help men get through the numbness and discharge the feelings without sacrificing their strength and pride.

Although the "male" role that we have been trained into discourages any display of "weakness," men are models of the discharge and recovery process; otherwise, few of us would have made it through the struggles we have had to face. Men have found songs they cry to while they drive, ways to shake while they give speeches, jokes that allow them to laugh uproariously, fence posts to kick and yell at. Our job now is to encourage full use of the discharge process and widen the range of ways that it is available to each individual man.

Men want warmth and affection with all other humans but have been trained to expect it only from women and only through the small opening of sex. This equating of affection with sex often puts women off and, frightened about being rejected in their search for affection, men try to overcome the fear by being aggressive. These attitudes can never be successful, and will melt into discharge if they can be contradicted with thoughtfulness, warmth, and an insistence on being treated right.

PRESENT REALITY

Because of the power left in our hands, we are in the position to be the best allies of women, young people, Gays, and all other oppressed groups. This requires us to give up the guilt of being in an oppressor role, to take pride in our power and to use it.

ABOUT THE DRAFT POLICY FOR MEN'S RE-EMERGENCE

Harvey Harrison
Des Moines, Iowa, USA

Statement of Unity

Men are the male members of the species Homo sapiens. We are united by certain physical characteristics such as distribution of body hair, range and quality of voice, and primary sexual characteristics. In the Western culture we are also united by fairly broadly-based assumptions about what constitutes the norm for male roles in relationship to the universe and all its aspects.

Appreciation

The history of men is rich in its diversity. At various times in history, men have effectively modeled leadership in all areas of human experience. Men have been producers, builders, dreamers, writers and have created much of what is good in our world.

The Inception of Oppression

As young people, male children are oppressed. It is this oppression that creates the precondition to men later colluding in the oppression of others. No young person agrees to the imposition of these oppressive patterns. In fact, all children actively resisted this oppression with all of the resources available to them at the time. The installation of these patterns upon young persons leads to the later collusion by adult men in the oppression of others.

Fathering

Within the limits of an expanding science and technology, which may alter the necessity of the male biological role, men are the members of the species that can be fathers. Due to this, the survival of our species depends upon some men being willing to become fathers. There is no inherited biological limitation upon the role of a father nor the functions that a father can perform in relationship to young people. All such limitations are from cultural conditioning.

Statement of Identification with Oppressed Groups

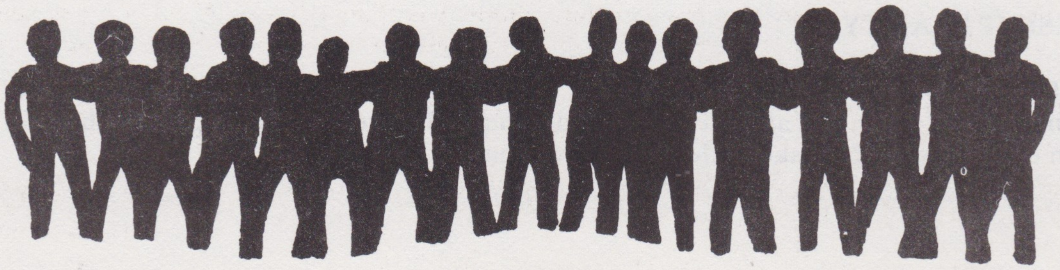
It is important that men identify themselves with the causes of the oppressed peoples in our world. To the extent that men are willing to do this, oppression will be interrupted and ended sooner. It is particularly important that men identify themselves with ending the oppression of Gay persons by our culture. This oppression constitutes a limitation upon the identity and roles available to men and will lead to a continuation of existing distress patterns.

Short-Range Goals

Men must establish goals leading to the elimination of all barriers to closeness and communication between them, the elimination of homophobia, the elimination of the oppression of all groups, with particular emphasis on the elimination of oppression of women and Gay people.

While these goals are being formulated for long-range action, it is imperative that men participate in an educational process of increasing the awareness of other men about the oppression in our society and the position of men as agents of that oppression.

Men should also immediately work toward the elimination of violence toward any person in our society as a means of avoiding a complete breakdown of our society.



IF

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

Gay Oppression Oppresses Everybody

For the past several years leading men's workshops throughout the United States, I have been uncovering the underlying dynamics, developmental forms, and current effects of Gay oppression on men—on those who identify as Gay and on those who do not. I am seeking to understand the ways in which Gay oppression, sexism, and homophobia are mutually re-enforcing and service basic class oppression. Males are hurt in becoming men, and that causes us to sometimes act in hurtful, scared, and unloving ways in the name of manhood.

In reclaiming with complete pride our inherent identities as men, we will be more able to express our manhood in all its diversity and humanity, root out the misinformed notions of manhood which negate that humanness, and defy with conviction the contents of Gay oppression wherever it occurs and to whomever it is directed. . . .

Our job is to do whatever it takes to reclaim our own wholeness as human beings, and to support other males to do the same. That will mean repudiating those oppressions, especially sexism and Gay oppression, that would make us feel less than complete men, and completely human, and would divide us among ourselves, as well as from women. We can remind one another of the full range of qualities that we possess inherently and with abundance, no matter what qualities the hurts of oppression have temporarily denied us or robbed us of. We will discover that in combatting Gay oppression, we are standing up for ourselves, especially as we risk being subjected to it and risk feeling the victim place where we feel like less than men. In reclaiming our full power and our "feminine" qualities, our capacity to love and be loved, our caring and our openness, we will naturally ally with other men and women. And in making friends with Gay people, we will be providing ourselves the safety to feel the fear that keeps us from true closeness with ourselves and with one another. In being supportive and close with other men, we will be risking nothing less than the hurts and fears that have kept us from knowing our complete manhood; we will find our true natures. We will not need to depend on women, as they put their energies into their own lives rather than in making us feel better about ourselves as men. We have to do that for ourselves and for one another. In combatting sexism and Gay oppression, we will have a chance to re-inform the world of what men are about.

Charles Kreiner
from "Gay Oppression and Men"

ARE MEN OPPRESSED?

—Harry Brod

Recently in RC we have begun to pay more attention to the systematic mistreatment men receive at the hands of this society. At the same time, as men become overburdened by responsibilities to others, we are told we must shoulder our load without discharging any of the hurts we suffer, for this is "unmanly." We are penalized for any ability to work hard by being put into jobs which exploit us and keep us separate from and competitive with other men. These widely-shared hurts are concrete proof that any form of oppression is in no one's real human interest, because what we are uncovering here is the systematic hurt caused to men by sexism.

An analogy with racism will help here. There is a real hurt to whites which comes from racism. To keep racism in place, whites are "whitewashed" out of our own cultures; we become "melted" into the melting-pot of the United States, as a popular image has it. This loss of our roots has tangible effects. Whites have been described as "out of touch" with reality, of being distant and not connected to the earth. Whites are often aware of this without being able to identify it. For example, when the TV show "Roots" sparked a national outbreak of people trying to find their backgrounds, the areas most affected were the predominantly white areas of Los Angeles. While this loss of our national ethnic cultures is a hurt to whites from racism, I think we are clear that whites are not oppressed by racism. Similarly, while men are hurt by sexism, we are not oppressed by it, and it is important to maintain this distinction, for reasons which I hope to make clear.

As we uncover and undo more of the hurts men have suffered as men, there will be a pull to call this oppression. After all, it certainly feels as bad. But we must remember that oppression is not a concept which refers to people's feelings. It is a concept which emerges from a social and political analysis of society, and points to an institutional power imbalance in society, in which one group takes advantage of another group. To say that one person is oppressed and another is not, is not to say that one person feels better or worse, or has more or less pain or patterns than another person. It is to acknowledge that there is a different kind of hurt, one which is repeatedly restimulated by power imbalances in our society.

This becomes especially clear if we look at that area in which the effects of oppression do their most long-range damage, the internalization of the oppression. Part of every oppression is the installation of a distress recording whose basic message is that one's basic nature and identity is somehow less than fully human, a recording which if put into words runs something like "I'm only a ______ (whatever the particular category is)." There is no counterpart for this internalized oppression for men. Though men do carry a great deal of internalized invalidation, its content is more like "I'm not enough of a man." In our case, the basic sense of self-worth is not called into question by society. Being a man is at least held up as a positive image. None of us is allowed to reach this ideal, and this is a source of great hurt and distress, which of course can feel just as bad and be just as hurtful as what a woman experiences, but it remains a qualitatively different kind of hurt, no matter how quantitatively great. "Be a man" carries radically different emotional overtones than "be a woman."

Not only does the contradiction of this kind of distress require different counseling, but, more important, it requires different kinds of strategies to correct these problems in the world. This is a key reason for maintaining the idea that though men are hurt by sexism we are not oppressed by it. Retaining the concept of oppression as one-way mistreatment of one group by another keeps the picture clear when we try to think of wide world changing strategies. It keeps us pointed at the institutional power imbalances which need to be changed. We are in a much stronger and more effective position if we carry the message that we are learning about the drawback of being in an oppressor role, and thereby providing incentives for taking more active roles as allies, than if we muddy up our picture of how society works by saying that men are oppressed by sexism. It can be demonstrated for any form of oppression that being in the oppressor role carries with it apparent material advantages but overwhelming human disadvantages. This realization promises to become increasingly important in the future.

REFLECTIONS ON MILITARY SERVICE

Report On Men's Work In Israel, 1978 – 80

Men's activities here have been progressing well over the last couple of years. A Men's Caucus appeared for the first time at a workshop in late 1977 and by November, 1978 we started an ongoing men's class in Jerusalem. The class meets once a month. We've covered a wide range of issues: the meaning of courage, homophobia, the army, fathering, standing up against sexism, allowing discharge, to name a few. We've had one Men's Workshop in the Spring of 1979, which was a big push for all of us.

Because of the overwhelming emphasis on the struggle for national survival and liberation, the Israeli feminist and men's movements are still in a beginning state. There have been few opportunities here for men to get together in this way. In order to participate and take the steps they have, each man in the community has had to make a courageous leap out of the pressures of society which keep the oppressive behavior intact.

There are a few key factors that shape the daily life of the Israeli Jewish man and affect the struggle he has to make to recover his humanness.

First is world-wide anti-Jewish oppression. Israelis grow up and continue to live with the feeling that they are alone in the world and that only they themselves will stand up for their right to survive and flourish. Among the many ways that this emphasis on self-defense affects people's lives is mandatory army service. Every Israeli man faces three years of army service from age eighteen to twenty-one, and then reserve duty of about forty-five to sixty days a year until age fifty-four. As one man said to me, "We don't have a word for veterans or ex-soldiers; we say B'Miluim (in the reserves)."

Army service is not something that men try to avoid -- in fact, there is a lot of pressure in society to serve. The more combat experience that one has, the more credibility a man has in society in many spheres (getting a job, political influence, socially). Physically different men or men who don't serve for other reasons are oppressed because they haven't "been at the front," or "have no right to talk about politics because they don't know what it's like."

For the vast majority of Israeli men, the army is a humiliating and fearful experience. There is certainly a sense of pride and courage and comraderie but also much guilt and shame. Men are deeply hurt by having to take part in killing, and there is the added sense of guilt in having been compelled to collude with the oppression of Palestinian Arabs, both in the Army and without. One of the more explosive and moving examples of our work here was one man, a tank commander, discharging hard on his war experiences and then making a commitment to never again participate in the killing of Arab children.

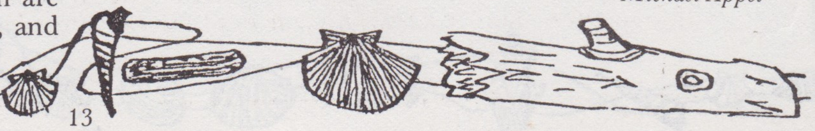
A second key factor which sits like a weight over the lives of Israelis is the conditions of the economy. Israel is an under-industrialized, Middle Eastern country. It's economy is dominated and exploited by the large Western European and US multinational corporations and financial institutions. It is very dependent on the investment of foreign capital. Inflation here is running over one hundred percent per year. Israeli working men are victimized severely by this situation. There is a constant, almost desperate pressure to gain economic security and stability in one's life. The pressures of the market, even more than in the West, push people to look after their own business, keep a job at any cost, find a stable marriage partner, buy an apartment, etc. Men are continually having to focus on their survival and away from "frivolities," like re-emergence.

Israeli men are beset daily with these conditions. There is much despair. People feel overwhelmed by it and are pushed into a position of having to be "strong and tough." You can not show weakness because weakness will be used against you by the rest of the world. In this way, discharge is inhibited on a societal scale.

In spite of all this, Israeli men struggle bravely and are winning. They take their strength from a sense of belonging to a people. There is a lack of pretensions. Their lives are focused on the central issues of renewal and solidarity as a nation. The concept of sacrifice, although constantly under attack by the pressures of capitalism, is still lived up to. There is a high value put on family closeness and friendship. Their loyalty transcends personal interest. Where one listens, one finds that their furthest goals and beliefs are of the unity of all peoples, respect for differences and a co-operative sharing of talent and energy to push humanity forward.

What follows is what some Israeli men say about their lives.

Michael Appel



M. Talking About His Life

I was born in Jerusalem. We moved to Zabala when I was four. This was during Tzena, the depression of the early 50's. For me it was fun. Everybody in my neighborhood had animals and grew vegetables. We used to steal eggs from the neighbors and throw them at each other. We got severely punished for it. You don't do that during a depression. One day we got American butter. I remember my brother eating it with a spoon. He was really excited. I didn't care very much because I didn't eat much at all. My stomach was affected by polio, as well as my legs.

I remember the 1956 War. For me, it was fun. I lived in an Army neighborhood. Everybody was always digging trenches. We played in them. I loved reading and hearing about the war. The Eichmann trial (1961) was similar. Also very exciting. We would listen to the radio to hear the details of what was going on. I remember my mother complaining about people hoarding. Actually she was doing the same thing.

I remember something from about 1953. In the period before the war, the Arab states mounted commando operations all over the country and we retaliated. One of my friend's brothers was in the Army and he told us about a heroic stand by the Israelis in the Golan Heights. He told how they didn't retreat in the face of a heavy attack, how they dug in. I remember how impressed I was by the story that no one retreated. How frightening war was! That was the first idea I had of what war was like.

I was a very good student. I went to a Socialist school in high school. My parents were worried because I had to hitch-hike. But it was much easier than going to a school nearby which I had to walk to. That was really hard. My school was great. The teachers were social revolutionaries from Germany and Russia who had come to Israel in order to "re-educate" the Jews. They were unique people.

Then I was eighteen and everybody went to the army and I went to Law School. That was my life. I never did what everybody did. I never played when everybody played. I was optimistic. I found reasons to be happy. But I felt terrible. Especially because I was from a military-oriented neighborhood. Anybody who was a non-combat soldier was like someone you could piss on in the streets. It was really a very oppressive idea of how you were supposed to be.

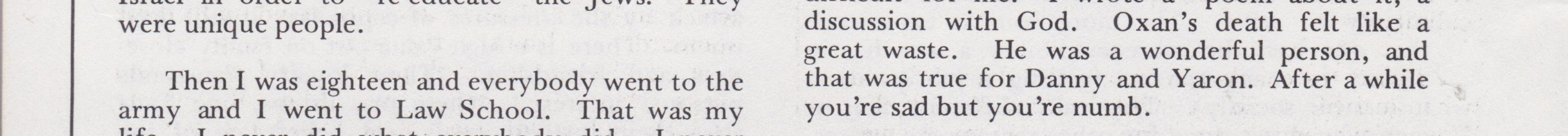
Before the Six Day War broke out there was a period when many people had been mobilized and there was a great shortage of working hands in the country. So I went to Kibbutz and helped. Then the war broke out. We didn't know much about what was going on. One day three planes were going by about ten meters overhead. The pilots waved at us and we waved back. Then suddenly we realized they were Jordanian. Everybody got so panicked. Then a few minutes later we saw them bombing a nearby factory. Then we watched them being shot down by Israeli Mirages. It was all very frightening.

Many of my friends died, including my best friend from high school. He was really nice. All my age group were the ones that died. I never think about it any more. You get used to living with people dying all around you.

I will tell you the story of Chava. She was a great person, someone I really loved. Her mother and father were Holocaust survivors who met in a refugee camp after the war. They came to Israel and gave birth to two children, whom they named Adam and Eve (Chava). Chava had a boy friend, Dubie, and they were going to get married. We all hung out together. A week before they were to be married, she died in an accident. Her brother was badly wounded in the war. And Dubie later died in the Yom Kippur War. Whenever someone asks one about how life is in Israel, I tell this story. It's the feeling that you have. You must live your life intensely and well and do it quickly. You never know what will happen next.

Everybody's death was different for me. Sometimes I just knew it. Like Dubie. It was a Saturday and I heard the sirens and airplanes moving. I said, "Dubie will die." And he did. When Tzaki died, I fainted. That was the most difficult for me. I wrote a poem about it, a discussion with God. Oxan's death felt like a great waste. He was a wonderful person, and that was true for Danny and Yaron. After a while you're sad but you're numb.

Life is hard for a physically different person in Israel. It's hard to find the identifications, because as a man, you prepare yourself a good part of your life to serve in the Army. That is what happens after school. It has all the elements: fear, bravery, death, hard work, masculinity. For me, it was non-existent. Once a month



in elementary school, there was a day devoted to training. You learned to shoot, you ran, wore khakis. It was a great day. I was exempted. I never came to school on those days. It really isolates you. As you grow up as a man you identify with people. You have your heroes. When you're physically different you find it difficult to find them. You can not be Superman. I found it difficult to find a place.

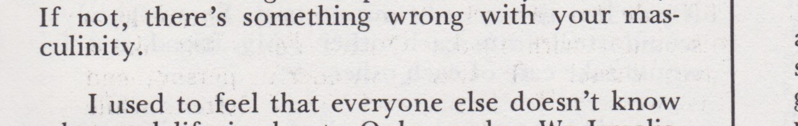
You can't show what you feel. I remember my father saying to my brother in the most icy cold tone, "Do you think anybody is interested in how you feel?" My father used to get asthma fits and nobody knew he was suffering until he fainted. He never showed anything.

I remember when I stopped crying. I was in the hospital. They tried to repair the bone in my toe by putting a spike through. In order to remove it, three people held me down and one doctor twisted it out with a plier. It was excruciating. The tears were shooting out of my eyes and I was screaming for my mother to stop them. She was nearby and I watched her put her hands over her ears so she wouldn't hear and shut her eyes. I never cried after that.

My father would always say to me, "Life will be very hard for you," "You will always be alone; people will not love you." That was very hard for me. All my life I've been walking around with that.

We have a social group of men -- six of us. We've stuck together all through the years, except the men who died. Everything comes and goes, but this group always remains. We all got married in the same year. I worked two or three jobs at a time. It's typical. I was a law apprentice in the mornings, an assistant teacher at the university in the evenings and an all-night operator at the International Telephone Exchange. I slept about two hours a day. It nearly killed me. It's taken me years to recover. But there was no choice. You've got to provide for your family. If not, there's something wrong with your masculinity.

I used to feel that everyone else doesn't know what real life is about. Only we do. We Israelis. Now I'm coming to terms with many things. I'm getting to know myself. I'm re-adjusting my life. There are many patterns built around my former life, my old self, which are no longer suited to today. I have to patiently change my surroundings.



SERVING IN THE ARMY IN ISRAEL

For us Israelis the army is a very important subject. Many regard the army as the worst part of their lives. On the other hand, serving in the army is more than a duty, and although it is compulsory, many regard their service as something they volunteered to do. I, for example, did my three years of service although I could have been exempt for physical difference.

For me, the Israeli army has some good things about it. The army is a way I could serve a cause I believe in, and be ready to die for this cause. In a way, army service is like a commitment. We have to stand up for ourselves and each other.

The army gives a lot of encouragement for leadership, friendship, co-operation and other human qualities. It gives some people confidence they lacked. It makes people of different backgrounds meet, learn about each other and overcome some prejudices.

On the other hand, the army is an agent of every oppression that exists -- especially classism and sexism.

Some of the noteworthy aspects of this fact are as follows. The army uses, in many cases, the attitude of degradation. Because the soldier is trained to do things that go against his human nature, he is degraded and humiliated over and over again. This is, as we know, the major means of making a person into an oppressor. The army uses anonymity as a tool for dehumanization of the people. This serves two purposes -- first, as numbers, people are more easily degraded, and second, as numbers they can do things they would never have done as themselves.

The army sets false standards for manhood, and humiliates whoever does not stand up to these standards. Although the army is supposed to give equal chances for all persons, in fact classism plays a big role in promotion. Most officers are of high and middle-class background and most of the rank and file are of the working class.

Our goals for the army should be:

A. Long-range goal: to get rid of it, and find better ways to solve human "conflicts."

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B. Short-term goal: to interrupt and stop all manifestations of oppression in the army. If we can change the army from within -- by going against the things I mentioned, and communicating human ideas -- the army will become the tool for change. (I'm not talking about using the army as a weapon, but since, in Israel, most people go through the army, we can use it as a place for communicating new ideas.)

Eliezer Kallai
Jerusalem, Israel

Z. AND THE ARMY

Interview

I wanted to go in the Army. There was a certain romantic feeling about it.

I remember the way they tried to break me down. I remember giggling and thinking that it was hilarious when the staff sergeant screamed, "You have got thirty seconds to get off the truck!" when we arrived for basic training. I thought it was a game. Until I got caught up in it. Then a simple thing like sleep became very precious to me. They started punishing me with things to do all night, when I was already aching and tired. Some nights I had to carry a stretcher with somebody on it as punishment. Then I wasn't able to stay out of the ridiculousness. It became very tough. I'd make mistakes and people would laugh at me. Fear. The main thing going on was fear. And I feared people of rank telling me what to do and punishing me.

It was very important to be in a combat unit. There's a lot of social pressure. If you don't make it here there's a stigma against you. On the one hand I would've liked to be in an office for three years; on the other hand, I didn't want the stigma. So I joined the paratroopers. It felt great to have wings and a red cap. I was proud of myself. As a matter of fact, one of the most fun things in the Army was the jumping course. Even though it was scary. It was great. Jumping off platforms, then transport planes. Fifteen hundred feet. We were in the air one minute. Scary. They open the door and you don't believe it. I'm going out there? Some guys would take off their helmets and refuse. They would be disgraced. But I didn't blame them; they had so much equipment on,they had to be lifted on the plane. (laughs) So it felt good to have the symbols of manliness -- the red boots, cap and wings.

I remember the cold and the mud. If you cried, people would say you're breaking down. I remember once at Suez, this one guy started to cry during some shooting. His friends would not let him forget it. "You want your mommy," they would taunt. A couple of times I was insulted by officers - pushed, kicked. But I couldn't show them that I felt beat.

When the Yom Kippur War broke out, our group was one of the last called. I remember thinking all the time, "Am I going into combat? "Am I going to have arms or legs after this?" Mostly I was in the Jordan Valley. It was terrifying because there were always rumors going around that we were getting beaten. And in a lot of ways we were. I would think of Jerusalem and my parents not far away and what will happen. Just before the cease fire, they took us down south. We were supposed to attack a huge Egyptian base with artillery, tanks. I was just praying. Everybody was writing their last letters home. But in the end, at the last minute they called it off. I was so happy.

Later they took us into Egypt. Helicoptered us in at night. It was scary. I was numb with fright. We went on patrol. I was watching the tank battles. But we didn't get into a skirmish. Again, I was relieved.

One thing that was lucky was that people that I was close to didn't die. Though one guy who helped me a lot in paratrooper training - he dragged me once for twenty kilometers on a march -- he was great -- he was killed. He was such a good person. I felt terrible and guilty that this guy got it.

I'm always worried that there will be another war.

I'm proud of a few things. Some of the physical stuff - endurance. The times I helped friends. I remember I had a good buddy at Suez during the war. We'd light up a cigar together - it felt good. Everybody had the same equipment. If you lost it you had to pay or be put on trial. So everybody would steal from each other. My friend and I would take care of each other.

During this whole period of my regular army service, I began to think, "What's wrong with me?" There was nobody there to reassure me that I'm okay. If I'd had RC information then it would have been a lot different.

M: How are the Reserves?

Z: It's been much better in the last couple of years. As I'm moving in my life, I relate to people better. There's more of a feeling of sharing. We're

continued . . .

all different people—westerners, Israeli-born, Yemenite, Moroccan. I've been learning. It's a renewal.

But it's still tough, especially when you come back. It takes a while for any attention to get out. Even in counseling, people don't realize what I've been through. There is a lot of blame thrown at one.

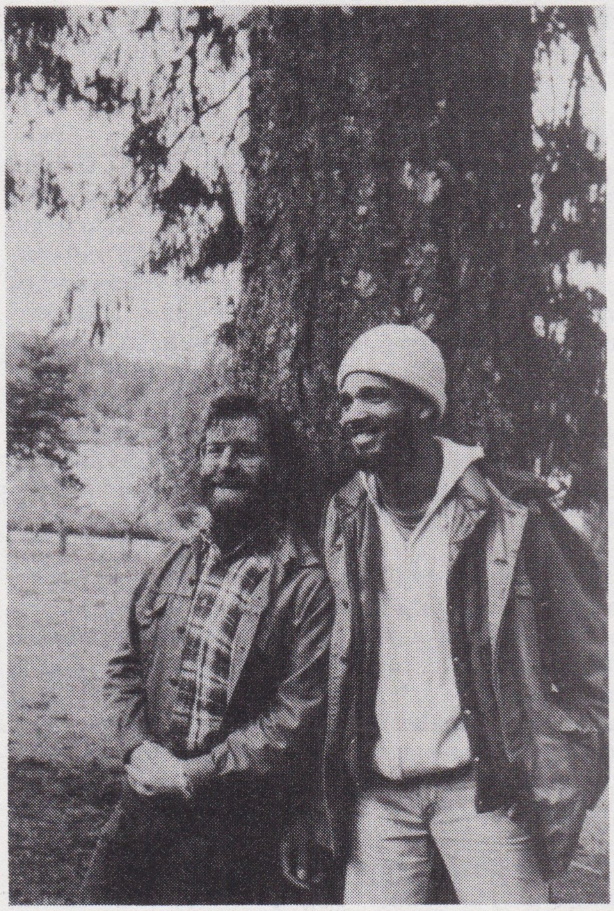
Now I'm in an armored infantry unit. I have to take care of this big, huge amphibious carrier. It's loud; it's dirty. Once it got messed up because the mechanics made a mistake. We were so happy (laughs). But I continue to take more responsibility with each reserve stint. Once I was in command of four other guys. I understood them well. They wanted to go home. But if they left, I'd get blamed. So we made a deal. It felt good to have the responsibility.

M: If war broke out tomorrow, then what?

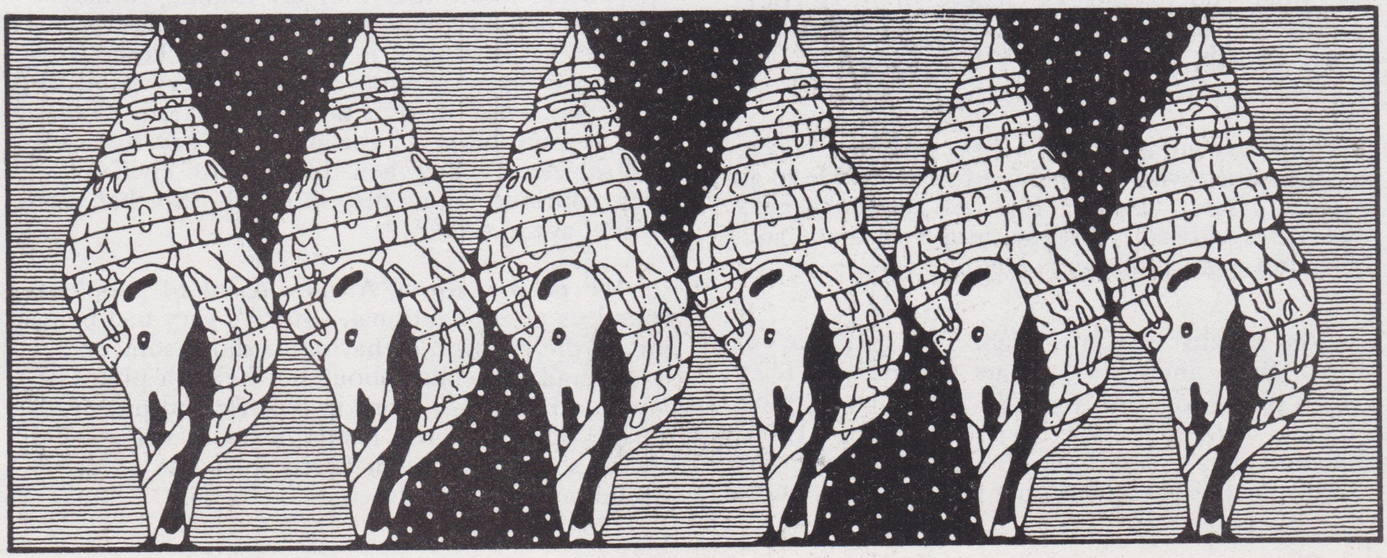
Z: I hope it's over in half a day. But if it's a war for survival, I want to be part of it. I wouldn't shirk any responsibility. But it's getting more cloudy. Is it really a war for survival?

After hearing Palestinians speak, I really understand more. I remember having to go after a commando who infiltrated on the border. We shot him. It had to be done. His objective was to kill. I don't like it, but I'd do it again. We have to defend ourselves.

But we need to be acting on other levels. Immediately. Listening. Talking. Making friends. Ending the oppression.



Bill Turner and Cliff Jones
(at the NW USA and W. Canada Regional Conference)



Interview :

Q. AND THE ARMY

The main fear is that I'll crackup some time and do the cowardly thing. I remember some incidents where I was very afraid but I did the right thing. So I have more confidence.

The first time was in battle. We didn't know where our forces were. It was empty. We figured there must be mines on both sides of the road. My mouth was getting dry from the fear. When another car came toward us, I said, "We're not getting off the road." We didn't have to; it was one of our own, and we squeezed by each other. I knew I could function then; I didn't lose my head.

Another time was when one man in my unit was burned. He was crying and in pain. I was really scared he was going to die. I took him out, quickly and smoothly. I saw him a year later -- not a sign of a scar. I felt good.

Recently there was a very high alert and I thought there was a commando in my camp. I saw a light in a bunker, heard some noises. I called in for him to get out; no answer. Okay, I'm in charge, so I have to go in and get him. I was scared. Maybe I'll get killed. I tried to scare him out by beating my rifle on the roof. Nothing happened, so I went in fast. Nothing was there. It was scary, but it gives me more confidence.

I'm an officer now. That's a problem sometimes. Giving orders that you're not convinced are correct is difficult. Yet that's it. Several times I argued but the commanding officer would make the final decision and I'd have to pass it on to forty people with minds just as good as I have. I can't say to them, "I know it's wrong, but what can you do?" You can't give every soldier the opportunity to judge every command. Next time when I give the order and he doesn't believe in it, it could backfire in all our faces. I don't like saying to them, though, "Here's the order; it's got to be." It hurts.

Once my commanding officer told me to keep my men busy when they should've been able to go home. I said, "No sir, I'm not going to make their lives difficult just because you feel bad." We didn't obey and it was okay.

I'm a hard worker. Eight a.m. and I'm out there. Sometimes my men are not into it. They get no prizes for hard work. So I decided to set an example -- to be competent, to be right. To be someone they could trust. I couldn't give up because someone was pressuring me. What pressured me was human relations. I wanted to be friendly, but I knew there was a job to be done. I used to be overly responsible. I almost had a mutiny on my hands. I didn't know how to give praise. I was in charge. They were my "workers." So they sat me down and decided to change things, to redistribute responsibility. Things began to get a lot better.

M. What happened to you in the war?

Q. I didn't feel good about staying home during the '73 war. The Army didn't call our unit. When there's a war, every man goes to war. So if you're a man you go. If you don't, maybe you are not a man. You are shirking your responsibility. That's how it felt. My age group fought and a lot of them died. The ones who made it through were very changed people. Why should I be exempt?

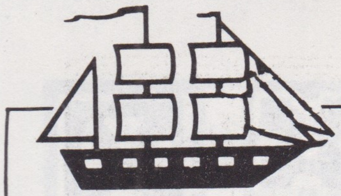
A friend of mine, in Suez, had to run from man to man between a hail of bullets to wake them up to attack. But I haven't had to do that. So I still feel like I owe something. Sometimes, though, I would think, when I feel really bad, what the hell, maybe I could lose a leg honorably and that would fulfill the obligation. Okay, they want a leg, give them half a leg.

There were moments of elation. Movement. Singing about going AWOL (away without leave). I've had good friends. People that have been with me through the hard times. You trust them for always. You can always count on them.

M. Do people question what they are doing, openly?

Q. People know that they are training to maybe have to defend their survival. The officer commanding my battalion is very active in Peace Now (an Israeli Peace Group). He is a very good officer, too. But there is no contradiction. People take responsibility in the Army. They hate war and the Army. So when they go into civilian life, they continue taking responsibility. So that they won't have to fight.

We need a strong Army. A lot of people around us are not rational. But it's very bad being put in the position of having to shoot someone. I have similar feelings about my being a physicist. I would rather not work in defense and put deadly technology in the hands of those who would rather see ten of them killed than one of us. I would rather see all eleven go on living.



IN THE NAVY

I still find it hard to describe, but I tried to imagine what I would tell my son if he should want to join the Armed Forces. I remembered that when I joined the Royal Navy at the age of fifteen, I could only see the glamour from reading Horatio Hornblower, belonging to the Sea Cadets and seeing adventurous films of naval life. I would want my son to know of the shock to this romantic image.

It began with being parted from my family and friends and finding myself with many other boys in a large, spartan-like dormitory room. My first morning began with being woken at the crack of dawn with a rough shake of the shoulder from my future instructor (who looked as if he disliked me from the beginning). I was taught from the start that, as a new recruit, I was the "lowest form of life." Everyone more senior to me I addressed as "Sir." I also found that I was expected to pass on my humiliation to those recruits who followed after me.

If I was homesick or troubled, I wept silently in my pillow at night. My privacy was completely invaded in a way I had never known and had never been informed would happen. All bathing and showering was always done in group under supervision, so as not to waste time or permit fooling around. The toilet doors had been taken off to ensure "no undue activities" took place behind them.

I was absorbed into the Royal Navy like a lamb to the slaughter, without realising, even whilst it was happening, the colossal amounts of freedom I was forfeiting. Within the first week, I was to sign a contract to join the Navy for eleven years—all I had to do was put my pen to paper. No longer could I disagree with "superiors": this was a serious court-martial offence. No longer could I claim spare time to myself: the naval contract ruled twenty-four hours of the day, seven days a week for eleven years. My hair was shorn to regulation standards. My clothes were naval uniform, so that outwardly my individuality was lost. I was now completely subject to the needs and cruelty of various instructors, whom I loathed all the more intensely for my powerlessness.

I poured out my thoughts through letters in those early days. I was always reassured for my pains that it couldn't be all that bad.

My aggression and energy I channelled into sports. To my surprise, I found myself competing successfully. My schooling became important to me: it became the way to earn approval from my "superiors." To be successful was surely the remedy to gain some crumbs of personal validation and significance.

After such heady success, I passed out of training school into the real Navy. Again, I found myself relegated to the "lowest of the low." The horrors of initiation into manhood began to be talked about. Rumours of having to submit to unspeakable sexual humiliations turned out to be only leg-pulling. This more insidious problem of leg-pulling made me, as a new trainee, the target for barracking and joking. Young, attractive boys are the butt of joking homosexual advances, which also serve to warn what a dreadful oppression there is of homosexuals.

Anxious to prove myself as a man, I was spurred on to make as many conquests of women as time and energy permitted me. These "trophies" were afterwards discussed with great relish. Never did I share, however, the love and friendship I received. Such real relationships seemed to me cheapened and discouraged by the aims of our war profession and the disruption of travelling around the world.

What the Navy provided for me, however, was an opportunity to move out of a restricting working-class culture. I delighted in travel, and each different experience widened my horizons.

At the same time I hated the Navy which uprooted, controlled, limited yet educated me. I needed to love, and be loved in a more creative way of life than this "sentence" of eleven years had held me to.

When I finally married and left the Royal Navy, I can't describe the sense of life and freedom I experienced. My questioning could again be valued, my sensitivity and love given to my friends and family. I left behind a life in the Forces that I still mainly hate and reject, yet one which is an important part of me.

Slowly, after twelve years, I am beginning to place it in perspective, but some of the experience came back sharply for me in a recent RC men's workshop. I found myself angry at being back among an all-male society. The difference was I was able to work upon my feelings and find love and support, which I know exist among men but which I have such a struggle recognizing.

David

(reprinted from the So. England Region Men's Newsletter)

CIRCUMCISION

(From a question and answer session with Tim Jackins, Sara Woodsmith, and Patty Evans)

Question: What about circumcision?

Patty: I think that it is important to try to look at the whole practice of circumcision in light of current information about health. It also, of course, has a significance for different cultures and heritages. Also, you can look at the need for immediate circumcision of babies. One suggestion a friend of mine had after having their child circumcised was to go and watch a circumcision before you have a child circumcised. She said, "That will convince you not to have your child circumcised." I think it's a good rule of thumb to have a reason for any surgical procedure. It used to be a standard procedure to have your tonsils taken out, too, at some age. It does not look like there is an automatic necessity for circumcision. One push for it has been that it's nice for boys to look like their daddy. That is a standard thing that is taught in childhood education classes when people ask that question.

Tim: People are having a difficult time thinking about whether it is necessary or not. We are sure that it isn't necessary the first day or two of the child's life, even though it is a standard practice in most hospital births. It looks as though putting in that sort of a heavy incident that early in someone's life, just when they are new and trying to make sense of the world, is a mistake, as well as not being the friendliest greeting imaginable.

Question: How will it be different after a week or any length of time?

Sara: Someone will have a little more of an idea of what is out there in the world, a little bit more picture of relationships with people, where they have people caring about them that they can talk to, communicate with, and tell them what happened. It is going to be a distress, as is any physical damage. If something has to be done, you can go ahead and then counsel on it. It seems more helpful if they have more of a chance to develop a picture of the world around them in a positive way, where they can understand that there are people out there caring for them. That the world isn't immediately drops in your eyes, circumcision, cold scales and being rubbed to get you clean.

Patty: If parents decide to do that with a child then they need to have some idea of how to support the child. You need to commit yourself to supporting the child to discharge on it until they have worked through how hard it was for them. That is no small commitment, and parents need to know that.

A friend of ours decided to have her child circumcised after eight days, and the child cried solid for twenty-four hours after the circumcision. You need to be ready to supply whatever support the child needs to work on the decision you made about his life. The parents cried for almost the twenty-four hours, too. They stayed right there with the child, in a nice warm bed, just holding him and letting him cry.

Question: Why would somebody make that decision? What are the facts about it? What would be some good reasons for it? Aren't there supposed to be higher incidences of penis cancer? And how about cleanliness?

Sara: I don't know how accurate the studies are on that. There are a number of studies supporting both positions from a health standpoint.

Tim: The cancer argument was the justification given over the last few decades. Since then some studies have called it into question.

Sara: I think it is very important with more children not being circumcised now, to find ways of letting boy children work on their feelings of being different. There can be at least a lot of embarrassment between boys who are circumcised and those who are not, embarrassment about being different. It's important to help your child feel okay about being the way he is. If he wants to wear his bathing suit to take a bath you have a little clue that something is going on there. That's not uncommon.

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Question: Where would you get some real information about circumcision?

Sara: For information about the health aspects, read some of the studies that your doctor will have, or your library. Try to make sense of them.

Tim: You have to consider it more widely than that, as well. We are aware of other relevant factors that don't show up in those studies. You will have to think it out for yourself.

MORE ON CIRCUMCISION

As a Jewish male and potential father, recent references to the question of circumcision in RC discussions and journals have caught my attention. While I don't yet know what a rational decision about whether to circumcise any male child would be, I do know that I want to consider some factors which I haven't heard mentioned in this regard yet.

The act of circumcision itself is clearly painful. But if any one thing can be considered to be the defining mark of being a Jewish male, surely it is circumcision. So the pain of circumcision must be weighed against the pain of rejection and abuse from the Jewish community any uncircumcised Jewish male could expect to suffer. It seems to me that to attempt to shield someone from all hurt is not a possible goal. What is possible is to pass on the tools to discharge the hurt. The question of circumcision is not one of avoiding or inflicting hurt, it is a choice between different kinds of hurt.

It seems to me that we sometimes do the easy half of our job -- the part which requires that we not do something bad -- and neglect the hard part of our job -- the part which requires that we take some positive actions. We feel good about not dropping litter on the streets, but do we organize our neighborhood to really clean it up? We feel good about our opinions being good and not hurtful to others, but do we take advantage of every opportunity to communicate important ideas to others? Similarly, I think that any decision not to circumcise a male Jewish child must be accompanied by a priority commitment to working in the Jewish community to make it safe and accepting for that child, including challenging the traditional focus exclusively on males. Otherwise, we're just fooling ourselves -- feeling good about the easy part of our job as parents but neglecting the hard part, making sure the child has full access to the Jewish community and traditions.

I don't yet have the answer to this question, but I know that either way it is a decision to make a long-term commitment on my part, and I have to consider a lot more than just the act of circumcision itself. Such a narrow focus seems inappropriate, given where we are in terms of Jewish liberation. From a standpoint outside Jewish tradition, circumcision may seem like an outdated, extreme practice. But this just repeats the anti-Semitism of a predominantly non-Jewish society, focusing on what's abnormal from a non-Jewish perspective. After all, many other forms of baptism are distressing to the infant (so is toilet training, for that matter). Certainly our educational system, to take another example, is full of distress, but there we recognize the necessity of remaining in it while struggling to change it. As a Jew, I'm very concerned about too quickly moving to reject an historically essential aspect of Jewish tradition and denying the young person a full Jewish heritage. It is in this context that I'd like to do more thinking about circumcision, rather than just thinking of the immediate hurt to the infant, which is certainly dischargeable.

Harry Brod
San Diego, California, USA

I think circumcision is a major and fundamental way a lot of men get badly hurt very early in life. From what I've been able to gather, there's no rational reason for circumcising anyone; it seems to be one of those societal patterns that get unawarely transmitted from generation to generation, an "of course" kind of assumption that is rarely questioned. And yet it's very painful!

My work on my own hurt in this area came from discharging fear of being close and working on early memories of being hurt or scared when I was physically held, as well as early sexual memories. They converged when I role-played being small and being held while laying flat on my back. I had such terror! It seemed to be focused on someone hurting me between my legs. The distress is more than the considerable physical pain, of course. I think a lot of it is the unexpectedness of being hurt by people who were holding me and caring for me; a deep blow was struck at my trust in the inherent goodness of people! I still haven't unraveled all of it; it seems that another big part of the distress is that it didn't make any sense. Anyway, since I've done some work in this area I've greatly improved my ability to be rational about sex and to be physically and emotionally close with others.

I'd like to ask other men if they have done any work in this area, and if so, if they would share their experiences on a) the nature of the hurts involved in circumcision, b) what has worked to discharge the hurts, and c) what benefits they have found from discharging in this area. Thanks!

Bill Meacham
Austin, Texas, USA

Latino Men Speak:

an interview with Roberto Chené and Victor Padilla

Third World Isolation

Roberto Chené: How did you feel with only a few Third World men at the recent men's workshop you led?

Victor Padilla: There wasn't a lot of space for unawareness to come in with the Anglo men. Being the leader made things peer; people couldn't lapse into any condescension or anything like that. That was helpful, but there was a slight sense in the back of my head of isolation and that it was too bad there couldn't be more Third World men. I kept wondering about Andres and whether he was missing the safety of having Third World men. When I checked with him, he was doing fine with it. He was feeling that the gains he was making thinking of men and manhood were plenty to deal with. He had not gotten into thinking about being alone as a Third World man. Being in charge kept me from getting preoccupied with isolation. My continual focus was on men's re-emergence.

Third World Men's Awareness

Victor: I think the tone would have been different had there been a lot more Third World men. There is a newness for Third World men in exploring repressed feelings about each other, closeness and affection, because there haven't been any real models of a strong Third World men's consciousness-raising movement that I know of. I think that in the middle-class feminist movement there has been a trailing-along group of white men who have had the opportunity to explore their feelings. I think for Third World men most of the consciousness of sexism has come through political theory. We have not had a lot of opportunity to get together and share those feelings.

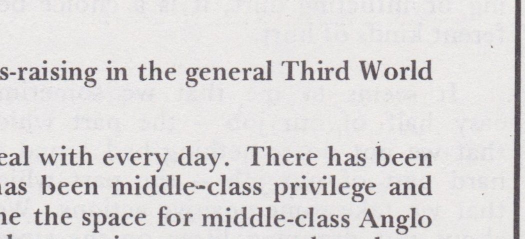
Roberto: Why do you think there has been less consciousness-raising in the general Third World population in the U.S.?

Victor: I think it has to do with the issues that we have to deal with every day. There has been space for a middle-class feminist movement because there has been middle-class privilege and freedom of time. And from that feminist movement has come the space for middle-class Anglo men to also explore their reaction to it. For Third World people our primary concerns have been survival concerns. Because of that we have not had time to dissect the relationship between men and women. There has not been the time or space to consider the impact of sexism because we have been thinking about eating or the cutting out of food stamps or a prison riot, etc.

Roberto: I think that the women's movement has been very significant in men's awareness and liberation, and I think at least in our experience it has been a white middle-class or upper-middle-class movement. Because of its origins, the classist and racist patterns that keep information from being spread as far as Third World men and women, filter in. In addition, language barriers inside the U.S. and outside keep information from being spread. Class differences and racism and the need for survival are too many obstacles; the information doesn't get around. Even if it got around, it is too hard to find a time to get together to have a consciousness-raising group.

Use of the Word "Macho"

Roberto: We have to start interrupting very assertively the use of the word "macho." It is now so pervasive in our culture that everyone uses it. This is really hurtful to Latino men. The actual definition of macho is a male who cares and loves.



Victor: I think one way to get around this is for English speakers to look around for what popular word in English there is to describe male sexist patterns. A lot of times "sexist" is an esoteric political word that many working people might not understand. You could find something like a "jock," something along those lines that might describe what we are talking about without using a Latino word like "macho." It would help clarify things a lot in people's minds and it would steer things away from the mistaken belief that Latino men invented sexism. I don't know what word might be good, but the "jock syndrome" is one phrase that gets at it. Popular examples like Robert Wagner or heroes on T.V. who exemplify the patterns might be good.

Consciousness-Raising and Survival Struggles

Victor: Because our reality is one of being preoccupied more with the oppression and the survival struggles, we need to constantly integrate consciousness-raising for men into the survival issues and struggles. We can't have separate study; it makes a lot more sense for Third World and working class people to integrate the consciousness-raising into everyday things like union drives, organizing, food stamp protests. Third World people will not have enough time in the short run to say "Let's get together Thursday at five o'clock to have a consciousness-raising group," so it is going to have to be infused into our ongoing practice.

Roberto: One implication of what you are saying is the need to implement an RC perspective of the world in any work that we do. As we do union organizing or counseling or community organizing we need to develop techniques for this and confidently say that these are the ingredients that have to be there.

Victor: Let's say you are going to the machinists' beer bust. To make it a success we have to take time out for the machinists to say good things about each other, to say what each other does really well. This is what Enrico and Gary do really well.

Pride in Being "Puro Macho"

Roberto: In a Third World caucus over a year ago I worked on my commitment, which includes taking pride in being "puro macho." Doing this made a big difference for me in getting past the fear that to do that means to be oppressive. Because I have had enough counseling support, it has been possible to feel free to go all the way with being "macho;" finding that what it means to me after discharging profusely is being all the qualities that I love. It means being loving and tender with children, being flexible and supportive and non-oppressive with Connie. The more I counsel, the more information I get about what it really means and the power connected to it; a kind of manliness synonymous with power in a rational sense. The times I have gotten in touch with being "lord of the castle" have been helpful to me. It seems to contradict the pattern of feeling intimidated by women and home. When I take charge and say, "I am lord of my castle" and really go with what that means in a rational sense, I am not intimidated by my wife or my children. It makes a difference in how I feel around the house. It is my house, too. I think it is a common pattern with men that they don't feel that they have a place at home. In the past, being "lord of your castle" has meant telling the women and children what to do. I think a rational interpretation of it is that I am here, I have a right to be here; it is my house too, it is my family that I love. In terms of more equitable sharing of duties it has made a difference. So I think it is a real direction to take.

Victor: It keeps you out of the old pattern of asserting yourself because you are desperate and know for a fact that the women and children are really in charge of your home; you are just visiting and you are going to push your weight around so that you can prove that this is mine, I paid for it and all that junk.

Roberto: I think many men feel so inadequate at home that they take refuge in what they feel adequate in -- making the money, carrying two jobs, etc. That feeds the cycle. When you are carrying two jobs you are home even less, but you have a lot of money, so you hold that over the family and say, "Well, look, why are you complaining? I am buying everything for you."

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Roberto: Being the bread winner means not simply that we are patterned in that area. We are so patterned in the other direction that we can't move toward feeling that we have a place at home. So we end up playing out the other pattern again of being the bread winner. Society supports the move in that direction and provides all kinds of obstacles to moving in the other, everything from other men telling you, "What's the matter; are you tied by the apron strings?" to "¿Que pasa, no? Te deja salir de la casa?" The put-down from other men is that you are somehow weak in committing yourself to home and family. I know for me at times there has been a lot of pressure to resist on that issue.

Victor: Some good directions are: "I really enjoy the central part I play in my household." "My household is one of my greatest sources of pleasure, creativity and satisfaction." "I don't know how I would live without my household." (much laughter)

Roberto: One thing that made a tremendous difference to several men was the time I gave you in front of the group to support you and help set a tone for the workshop. What seems to have moved people in the workshop was the love that you and I have for each other. That, more than anything, broke through and made a difference. One person who communicated with me indicated that it made a difference because he had not had that kind of experience with other men (crying and sharing of affection by Roberto and Victor).

Allies for Latino Women

Roberto: There is a need for Latino men to make a total commitment to love their Latino sisters despite whatever obstacles might exist that are restimulating. I know for myself that my being married to an Anglo woman is restimulating to my Latina sisters. I encounter it quite often and at times I can anticipate when it is going to be restimulating to a particular Third World woman. I think that I am responsible for getting rid of any guilt I have in this area if I am really going to be an ally to Latino women. I know that some Latino women are going to get turned off to me as a result of my choice of a partner.

Victor: I had an experience outside an RC context with a Third World man and a Third World woman. The Third World man was married to an Anglo. I was able to say to him in a teasing way in front of the woman who was rather put out by it, "Hey brother, when you marry outside your culture you have to pay your dues," and we all just laughed and laughed about it. The Third World woman was delighted that I could see this from outside of the guilt and defensiveness.

Roberto: I think most people are really ready to acknowledge the reality that any two human beings can love each other. I think it has been important in my relationship with Connie that we continue to clean up all parts of it. I find this makes a tremendous difference in how I reach out to the community. Regardless of how my wife might look or restimulate others, I know where she is really at. She is an aware ally and advocate. This kind of modeling has to happen in order to contradict the oppression that leads a Third World man to marry or live with a white woman out of a patterned attempt to achieve what he didn't have.

Victor: There is an article that I wrote about that in Pensamientos No. 2. One of the obstacles Third World men and women have to struggle with all the time in relationships is the feeling that they might not have to fight so much married to someone from the majority culture. This is the internalized oppression. Here we are, two Third World people. Along with all the other things that we restimulate in each other when we live together, is the internalized distaste we have for our own color.

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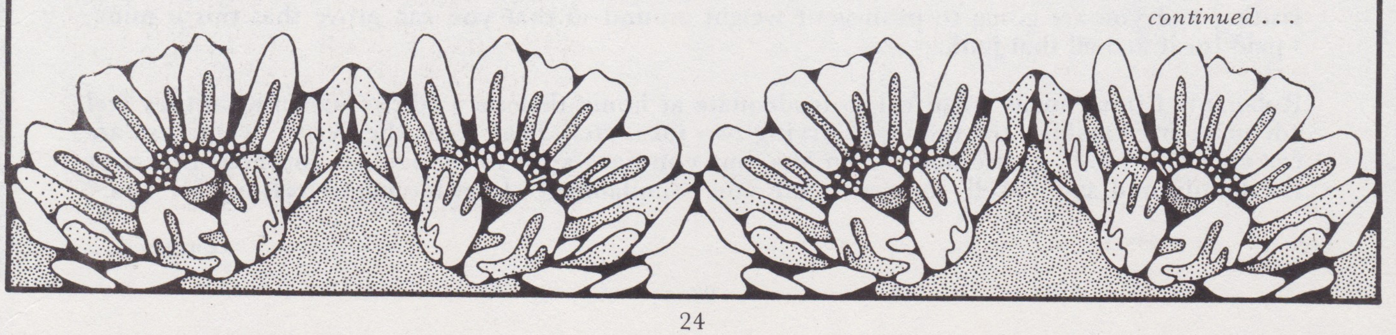

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Alliance with Other Third World Men

Victor: There are a lot of scary opportunities to practice coming out of the closet as Third World men. There is something scarier but much more profound working as a Latino with black men or Indian men or a whole group of Third World men on sexism. We did this at the World Conference a year ago. One of the most pertinent comments that was made there was by Danny Morriset when he said while we were all sitting around shaking in our boots, "It is good to get together some place other than in jail.' Because we have that oppression in common, we risk a lot more when we get together and say sexism is wrong and let's get on with talking about it and how weirdly it has affected us.

Roberto: Sometimes in RC we take for granted something that to most men is so unusual: men coming together in any kind of a caring way. Anytime our brothers come together in a caring way most likely will be a totally new experience for everyone there -- a time where the alcoholism doesn't interfere, where there is actual communication and support and so forth. We can encourage such meetings.

Victor: I think of the Cursillo movement among Chicano Catholics and how men get "addicted" to it, and I think one of the major factors is that here, under the practice of religious belief, men get together and treat each other as really human for a number of days or weeks and there is a brotherhood and safety to be human with each other.

Jewish Men Meet

Dear Trefor,

I want to report what happened at the Jewish topic group at the Bedford Men's Workshop.

We were four men, two who had been in Jewish support groups before and two who had not. For both the latter two especially, it felt "like coming home," with loads of tears of relief at realising some of the good things of our Jewishness that permitted us at last to acknowledge and feel pride as Jews. For some of us, as we reached further for our pride we found it hard to feel and began identifying some of the things that have been put in the way of being proud--the "keep a low profile," "we're not Jews, we're humans," the shame and the teasing we experienced, the guilt of being well-off or smart were some of the kinds of old recordings that came up.

We also started to explore the double bind that we found ourselves in, living in a Western culture. In Jewish families, men are expected to be caring, sensitive, helpful in the household, not very aggressive, neither heavy drinkers nor "womanisers," involved and concerned with knowledge and education of the children, etc. This expectation is, in many obvious ways, contrary to the stereotype of the "Western society man." Some Jewish men often feel like failures or sissies in the outside society when we exhibit these natural, wonderful qualities that we have been encouraged to retain.

Finally, we felt and enjoyed, if at first a bit tentatively, a new cohesion between us, and a new or increased determination to work in Jewish support groups and men's groups towards our full pride.

(reprinted from the So. England Region Men's Newsletter)

ATHLETICS

Athletic activity is an important part of the culture of the United States, particularly the male culture. Many of the values (and rigidities) of our society are transmitted through our participation in and exposure to sports. A thoughtful examination of this subject should yield insight into being male in our society, and should also help us get an idea of what the role of sports is in the world.

I have been interested in sports for as long as I can remember. Baseball, football, swimming, basketball, wrestling, boxing, racing of every kind, and many other sports were my major activities during non-school hours while I was growing up. I dreamt of being a star. I would look at other people who were more successful at the games than I, and I was convinced that I would be eternally happy if I had their talent. I wanted to be a champion!

As I grew older, I gradually began to believe that, despite my desires and dreams, I was not an athlete. Many other boys seemed naturally better than I was in everything. I felt too small, and I felt "uncoordinated." Most importantly, I felt that deep down inside, I did not have the nerve to perform under pressure, that in any tough situation, I would freeze (or "choke" as we put it then). I read about sports heroes who had the desire to win at everything that they did; I felt that in all that I did I would inevitably finish second. There were days when these feelings were contradicted, days when I would play exceedingly well at some game or another, but I credited this to luck, and I was convinced that I could never play well consistently.

My personal discouragement did not lessen my interest in sports. I became an avid spectator of most sports, and during my high school years I played a great deal of golf. By the time that I was a senior, I was consistently shooting a score around 80, (which is very good), but I discounted this with thoughts like, "Golf is not a physically demanding game," "There are so many others that hit the ball farther and play more consistently," "I make so many bad shots," etc.

As a spectator, I received a thrill every time someone made an excellent play. An important victory by one of my favorite teams would lift my spirits, and a loss, especially a close one, would be depressing. I discussed strategy, personnel, and statistics for hours. I loved being part of a roaring, enthusiastic crowd. Even professional wrestling, which I knew was a complete hoax, drew my attention and interest.

About nine years ago, while I was in my first year of college, I became involved with Re-evaluation Counseling. The theory of R.C., and the practice of co-counseling have been invaluable in helping me understand the role of athletics in my life, and in helping me see the effect that my feelings have had on my participation in sports. Most importantly, through co-counseling I have been able to tackle athletic challenges and have successes that I had previously thought were not possible.

What have I learned? I have learned that I am not a loser. I have realized that the feeling that I often get that says that I will inevitably lose is a result of years of compounded discouragement, frustration, and fear, as well as the fact that I have internalized other people's lack of confidence in me. When I play now, I attempt to take my attention off of any feeling of physical limitation, and instead focus on playing with vigor and abandon. This approach allows me to actually think during the contest, to notice much more about the game and its other participants, and to enjoy it more. During the last nine years, I have brought this approach to the sports of road-racing, soccer, weight lifting, and my first love, basketball.

I have noticed that there are certain moments in athletics when everything "clicks;" one could call them peak experiences. It can be a well-executed scoring or defensive play in soccer or basketball, a second wind in running, or a successful 40-foot putt on the golf course. For a few precious seconds everything works right, and I am filled with the thrill of being alive. As the co-counseling process uncovers more of my athletic confidence, I notice more of these peak experiences. I have had these kinds of experiences all of my life, but I am now much more able to notice and appreciate them (and I suspect that I am having more of them).

In the past few years I have looked more carefully at how athletics has affected other people, and while it seems that many have experienced the joy of playing sports, nearly everyone has had times of frustration, fear, loneliness, and humiliation. Most often, other participants and spectators have acted in ways that reinforce the bad feelings, rather than being supportive by listening to the person and offering thoughtful encouragement. There have been exceptions, times that a friend, family member, or perhaps a coach has been able to help someone work through a difficulty in their athletic development. All too often, however, our bad experiences accumulate and make it either difficult to think about sports, or cause us to eliminate sports from our lives altogether. It seems that we have trouble helping each other because we have all internalized the results of our own bad experiences, and to see someone else having difficulty reminds us of our own problems, making it difficult to think and be helpful.

Many potential athletes are also victims of thoughtless actions that are part of a wider societal network of oppressive attitudes. Women are often excluded from games, and when included, are the recipients of poor instruction and low expectations. Racial and ethnic stereotypes have their effect, pushing participants towards certain sports and roles, and excluding them from others. Persons with physical differences are often ignored, isolated, and/or unawarely challenged. It is a tribute to the beauty and joy of playing sports that so many people are able to overcome these individual and socially reinforced barriers and keep playing.

As we utilize Re-evaluation Counseling to examine the subject of athletics more deeply, what proposals can we make about the role of athletics in a human world, and what issues and questions need more investigation and discussion?

I propose that, as a starting point, we assume that each human being has limitless physical ability, except in the limited areas affected by permanent, inhibiting physical differences. I think that our attitude about our physical selves should parallel our attitude about our intelligence. Each of us has genius-like intellectual capacity, and superstar-like physical capacity, which are only obscured due to the lingering effects of the physically and emotionally hurtful experiences of our past.

A second issue demands rational analysis. The focus of much of the tension in athletics is competition. Our society gives us messages like, "Nice guys finish last," or "Every time you lose you die a little." Winners are idolized, losers are humiliated. However, to reject all competition as inhuman would be a mistake. It seems to me to be a natural human activity to engage another person or group of people in a challenging athletic activity. We do need to re-think our approach to winning and losing. I think that a good approach is the one proposed by John Wooden, the famous former basketball coach. Coach Wooden's attitude was that the purpose of each competition was to try one's best, and then, win or lose, one could always take pride in one's performance. In R.C., we have learned that every person, in every activity of the past has always tried their best, and so I suggest that we take complete pride in all of our athletic activities, win, lose, or draw. I propose that we enter any competition with an attitude of complete respect and appreciation of ourself, our teammates, and our opponents, and that we vigorously maintain this attitude amidst the biggest of blunders.

I am very interested in having responses to these ideas, and in hearing any insights from applying co-counseling to the topic of athletics. Certainly many more questions need examination, such as "What is the role of spectator sports in our society?", "Can sports becme an addiction, and, if so, how can this addiction be removed?", "How can athletics be a force for human liberation?", "How can sports be used as a way to bring men closer together?" I am interested in any answers to these and other questions.

Kurt Jacobsen
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

DISCHARGING JEALOUSY

How I Came to Work on Sexual Jealousy

About one-and-a-half years ago my partner and a close of friend of ours began a sexual relationship. The sexual part of this relationship was hidden from me for about four months. I began to feel suspicious and challenged my partner to be open with me. She told me then that the relationship was sexual. Since then I have had the opportunity to spend a lot of time discharging the feelings of sexual jealousy.

The sexual part of the relationship continued for another three months. I found that during that time I couldn't keep my feelings in my sessions, and it seemed a real possibility that our family (we are the parents of two young people) would dissolve. My partner, our friend, and I agreed at this time that the sexual part of their relationship would stop until the three of us agreed that it could continue. Recently it has seemed to me that I can keep my feelings in my sessions and I have agreed that they can resume the sexual part of their relationship, if they choose to.

A History of Jealousy

My jealousy seems to come from the experience of not getting the love and attention I need and deserve while seeing others I love give and get that attention. This experience has been a part of my life since I was very small. While it is true that there is not a fixed quantity of love in the world and that if someone else gets more, then I get less, it felt like that when I was growing up. It was not possible for my parents (or any two parents) to give my sister and me the love and attention we deserved. Often, when one of us was getting attention and love, the other was excluded. I was "jealous" and felt: "Nobody loves me," "I am worthless," "It's all my fault," and I was angry at both other people. At the same time, because the rational need for love and to love was frozen into the pattern too, I felt a strong need to love someone and to be loved.

What acting in the pattern in the past meant was to try to own the person I loved: "my mommy," "my friend," "my lover," "my wife," etc.

This pattern has been built up culturally, too, and the cultural distress fit in well with the chronic jealousy pattern I already had. All of my models, peers, parents and other adults assumed jealousy as a "natural" part of loving someone. All of them acted jealously, and all spoke of it as natural and proper. As I began to learn to think about women sexually, sexual jealousy became a big part of this learning. Dating, going steady, falling in love and marriage can all tie in with sexual possession and jealousy. Marriage usually assumes sexual fidelity.

Sexual jealousy seems to be like a door that opens to let in a lot of chronic patterns about love. The feelings I have when I am sexually jealous are that I am: unloved, alone, worthless, angry at my wife and friend for not loving me and for making me feel this way, incompetent as a lover, ugly and generally undesirable. Whew!

Hurt and Restimulation

What seems to me to be purely restimulation in this situation is the sexual jealousy I feel. I am in no way hurt, even if I feel terrible,when my partner makes love with my friend.

I have been hurt by being lied to, deceived and excluded.

It does seem to be a hurt to have had to feel this distress without the opportunity to choose the level or timing of the restimulation.

Some Ways to Work on the Feelings in Sessions

1. If you are a male, work (with other men) on the feelings of owning a women's sexual activity. Ed. note: Try directions like "She's mine" and "Hands off!"

2. Get as much detailed, specific information (down to the last trickle of sweat) about the sexual activity you are jealous of. Working on this information let me work directly on the door that lets in the chronic patterns. This seems efficient. It removes the "sexual" from "jealousy" and is faster than working on jealousy generally.

3. I found the following directions consistently helpful:
"My partner and my friend are my best allies in my re-emergence."
"I will do everything in my power to make it possible for my friend and my partner to make love as much as they want to."

4. Both my partner and my friend are co-counselors. I have had very good sessions with them. Their presence and love for each other was wonderfully restimulating. The above directions worked well in their presence.

5. I worked a lot on my first sexual memory. This loosened up the sexual tension the situation brought up.

In the Wide World

I found it crucial to have and make friends and allies outside my partner.

I developed strong counseling relationships with several men in the community.

It was important to insist that I be treated with the respect I deserve, most especially that my partner and my friend resist the pull to lie to, deceive and exclude me.

I resisted the reactive pull to begin another sexual relationship. The pull seemed to come both from wanting to fill the frozen need for love and from a desire for revenge. I discharged instead.

Chances are, if you love your partner and she loves another, you, too, would love that person. It is important to make the attempt. I found it crucial to reach out past my anger and hurt to my friend and reclaim our love for each other.

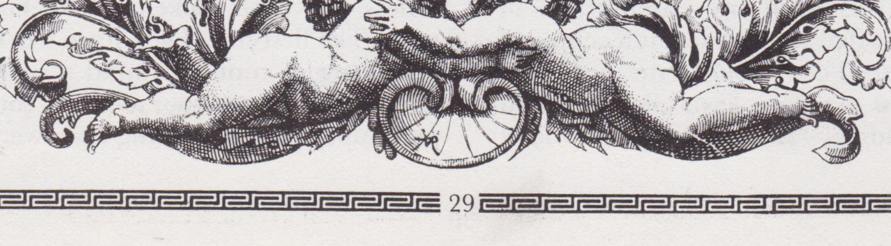
To Anyone in the Middle of this Stuff

It may feel like you'll never get through the material, that you will never reclaim your love for your partner. It isn't true; the hurt has an end and if you stay with it, you'll get through it.

The Future

I intend to get through all of my sexual jealousy. As large parts of my jealousy are discharged away I see my partner more clearly as a person independent of my feelings and needs. That has led to greater love, freedom, understanding, delight and fun in our partnership.

Anonymous



ENGLISH "PUBLIC" SCHOOL

by Tristan Wood

"Eleven years in that place," my English teacher remarked to me two years later. "I honestly don't know how you came through it unscathed." Well, of course, I didn't. Thinking about being at public school has occupied a lot of time both during and after, but the feelings have got pushed far, far away. I turned my back on the place as soon as I left. Not for me, the old boys' club and frequent reunions. Only now, nearly a decade later, am I beginning to come to terms with chance meetings with other human beings who went there too, and to get to grips with the isolationist patterns that school left on me.

I'd like to demolish a few myths. The first says that public schools in England are for the ruling and middle classes. Whilst this is predominantly the case, it's not totally true. There are different grades of public school and they nearly all award scholarships to some intelligent pupils from poor households, and several take in day pupils at cheaper rates. The school I went to, Colston's in Bristol (founded by Edward Colston, a well-known Bristol benefactor who made his money from sea trading, slaves included), was a second-rate public school with scholarships and day boys, so there were some pupils from working-class backgrounds too.

My own parents chose to sink all their savings into their children's education, which is how I got there, but the feeling was that I never really fitted in, either to the school or to the home lives of the other children. My own home life was much the poorer after I'd gone to Colston's. I soon lost contact with the other children on the estate, whom I'd been used to seeing frequently and sharing growing up together, simply because I wasn't there anymore. Nor were my parents there—they spent all day and often evenings, too, working hard to maintain the schooling payments they'd taken on. When I was at home, I was usually on my own.

When I was at school, I was basically on my own too. At the time I took the entrance exam (I was eight by then), I assumed I was going to be a day-boy, but boarding was what my parents had in mind, despite the fact that home was but a couple of miles down the road. They thought the discipline would help. The first evening, I was shown round the rambling building, being called "Woody Woodpecker," and then was bedded down in a cold bed in a jam of a room with thirty unknown boys. If you'd have had a good wail, someone was likely to stride in and beat you, or everyone would think you a sissy. That was what happened with those who wet their beds. So you put your head down and kept quiet and internalized most of the bad.

The main feature I remember of this preparatory school was gangs. Almost everyone got themselves into gangs, and gangs did incredibly irrational things. Those who kept out of gangs got picked on. On one occasion, the bell rang for lessons and I was left standing in a toilet, my penis tied to a waste pipe (another social grouping was the circumcised and the uncircumcised). I can also remember instances of being forced to fight friends. One time I refused to do anything because the fight was so pointless, and I ended up being squeezed unconscious. I did a lot of shaking when I came to, but said nothing.

A great deal of public school life is concerned with abuses of power by staff and double standards between staff and pupils. Our attempts, as we neared our teens, to share our sexuality with each other were heavily quashed whilst the headmaster (who was married) was free to indulge in a fairly open affair with one of the female teachers. One of the matrons had the eccentric habit of eating bread and butter with everything (even plum pudding) which was tolerated, yet would bully boys into finishing their meals within the allotted thirty to forty minutes. Once she made someone keep eating even though he'd thrown up over his food. And so on: . . .

At thirteen, having spent one year as a prefect in the preparatory school, I moved up to the main school. This was a daunting prospect—it was a lot larger and impersonal, we'd be starting at the bottom again, and rumours of terrifying bullying and monster teachers had been filtering down to us over the years.

From being at the top, I was suddenly at the bottom again. You didn't speak to anyone senior to you unless you were spoken to and bullying was common. The first time I got given a drill (a punishment consisting of running round a yard with hands on your head for an hour, with a couple of stops for press-ups) was for missing a shower, and the reason

I missed the shower was because I was being beaten up at the time. The upper school was also on a much more competitive base, the boys being arranged within a number of "houses" with great enthusiasm on house rivalry, particularly at sports. (This reminds me of a time when I was virtually forced to gain my house some points at swimming. The basic test was a few lengths breaststroke and backstroke. I did not know how to swim backstroke, but I still had to go through the ritual, doing the breaststroke and giving up the backstroke, my house master being overjoyed that I'd at least tried.)

Corporal punishment was more common here, too, than in the preparatory school, as prefects could administer the slipper (wet ones hurt most) and masters the cane. Basically, you did what you were told, whether it was inside or outside the classroom, on the sports field ("games" were compulsory in all weathers) or as a member of the army cadet force.

The oppressive atmosphere developed a new twist in my third year there. A boy called Dave came into the bottom year of the school and became a member of our house pop group (of which I was the singer) for the Christmas party. He also shared my interest in motor racing and we became firm friends. Such fraternising between "fifth uppers" and "fourth formers" was unheard of in those days, so the friendship caused quite a stir and we soon found ourselves the butt of homosexual jokes and insinuations from both the staff and other boys.

In fact, a very close relationship did eventually develop between us, but things had reached such a pitch at school by then that in our isolation, we only had each other. Despite its surroundings, I look back on that relationship positively. It felt like we'd discovered what caring for one another was all about in the middle of a hostile world. Some guilt crept in occasionally and messed things up, but the relationship lasted on and off for the rest of my time at school and I learnt a lot from it.

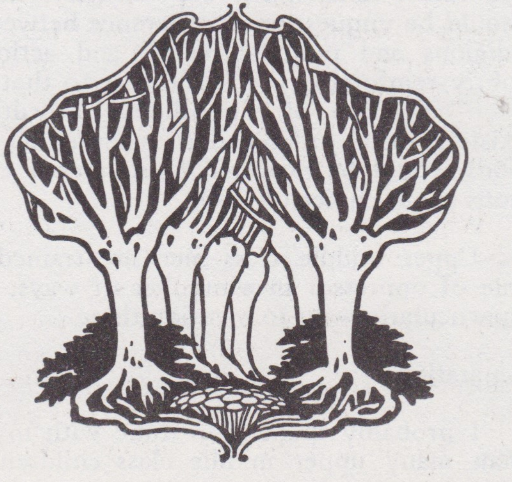
My last year at school I actually quite enjoyed. It followed a long cool period with Dave during which I was "rehabilitated" with the school in general, and for the main part of that year I only had one "A" level to study for and was permitted to spend a fair amount of time working on official and unofficial school publications in readiness for my chosen career as a journalist. By this time, too, my contacts with some staff members had developed to the point where I knew a fair amount of what went on in the bastion of power and prejudice, the masters' common room. I had a number of confrontations where I didn't back down and did well.

Somehow I managed to be made prefect in my last year, too. I actively campaigned for other prefects to stop using corporal punishment and it practically ceased in my house. We realised there as well that prefects, as housemasters' lackeys, did in fact have a lot of power as far as house organization was concerned, and so were able to run things on a fairer, more liberal basis, announcing tightenings-up every so often when the housemaster decided to carry out one of his periodic checks on what was going on!

Perhaps the greatest myth about public schools is that they're a better, i.e., privileged, form of education. (It's largely this myth that keeps them going.) Certainly, classes are often smaller than in state schools and teachers generally have more qualifications, but I'm dubious that there's any privilege in being separated from home and educated in an institution which thrives on oppression of young people, classism (our history lessons were so biased: teachers who are socially-oriented avoid public schools like the plague so those opinions rarely get heard), sexism (being separated from women certainly increased our perception of them as sex objects), and where all too often your behaviour is governed by adults who themselves have always been in one form of educational institution or another since school-age and have little real knowledge of the ever-changing world.

I've been counseling on my school days a fair bit over the last few months, mainly in one-to-one sessions. (I've been in public school support groups a couple of times, but find them personally very unsafe and over-restimulating.) Certainly, being at public school was a major factor in my becoming virtually unable to ask for help. Colston's was a place where you looked after yourself first and foremost and did your best to keep up a strong appearance, whatever the cost internally.

(reprinted from the So. England Region Men's Newsletter)



BEING UPPER MIDDLE CLASS

I would like to share something about being an upper middle class man, and some of the characteristics of upper middle class conditioning.

The first thing which springs to mind is the strong sense of context; real clarity about who I am and where I come from in terms of roots, and real pride in them. The upper middle class is very dynastic. There is great emphasis on continuing the line, maintaining family tradition and valuing your inheritance -- people, places and things. I was taught to be very proud of my relations and their achievements and to delight in older members of my family.

Most of my furniture once belonged to previous generations of my family. Parents will attach great importance to "having something to pass on" to their children (that means money and belongings) and children grow up expecting in due course to inherit a fair share of their parents' estates. There is collective outrage when this does not happen, if, for example, someone prefers to dispose of their money to a cause rather than to family members, or worse still, when someone has got through all their money and hasn't any to leave! Presumably, all this goes back to a time when someone, generations back, moved successfully into the upper middle class -- possibly through success in one of the professions or in the armed services or through making money and buying property. Once there, the preoccupation is with staying there and, by implication, with keeping other people out! There is implicit conservatism, a nostalgic hanging on to what was, rather than openness to new, and therefore threatening, possibilities.

The upper middle class is allied closely with the establishment; the expectation is that there should be unquestioned coherence between social, religious and political beliefs and actions, each subtly reinforcing the "hold fast to that which is good" position of the others. Loyalty to the existing social order and to maintaining its traditions would be expected to supercede considerations about choice of work.

Upper middle class men are trained for the role of oppressor in a number of ways, of which I particularly want to mention three.

Separation

I probably spent more time with my parents than many upper middle class children because by upper middle class standards we were not rich. But they nonetheless employed people to look after my brothers, sister and me. Eating meals with my father was something we looked forward to doing one day when we had learned to behave properly, and I came to fear my father as a remote figure whose special role it was to punish and rebuke his children.

At the age of eight, I was sent away to boarding school, where there was no one to tell if I felt unhappy. At school, we were required to write one letter per week to our parents. This was censored for anything which could be disturbing to them, in which case it had to be rewritten. It was unheard of to telephone our parents from school (from the age of eight to eighteen, I have no recollection of ever doing so), and I remember that we were not allowed to say anything critical of school in front of my father. At my public school, prep was called "lock up" -- you were, so to speak, locked up for one and a half hours to work, alone, and not allowed to speak to another person. I suppose I learnt early on to cope on my own, and appeared to cope well, even when I was feeling horrible inside.

Violence

"Spare the rod and spoil the child" was an earnestly held belief. Beatings were thought necessary and salutory: they were rather cold-blooded and ritualistic affairs which took place in my father's dressing room early in the morning. In addition to the beating itself, there was anything up to twenty-four hours of fearful anticipation. If beatings from my father could usually be associated with identifiable and concrete offences, those at school were much more arbitrary events. They were usually administered by older boys (and only occasionally by masters) for contravening some school or house rule which did not make too much sense in the first place (having your jacket done up on the wrong button, walking with your hands in your pockets, being ignorant of some piece of information which you should have known), or for breaking a rule which it was usually O.K. to break (talking after lights out) but which someone who felt like beating someone that night would choose to crack down on.

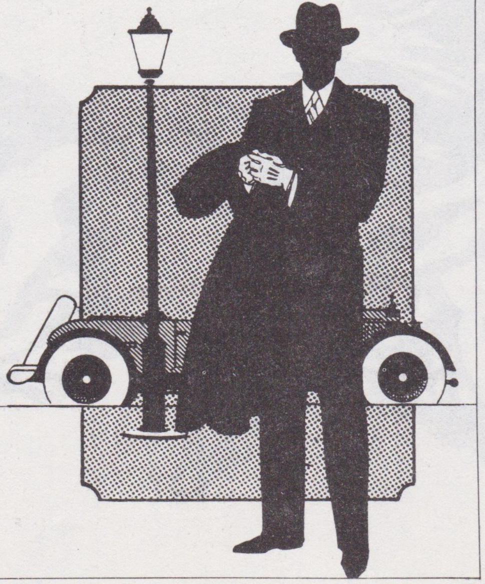
Exclusiveness

Whilst we were taught to be unfailingly respectful to and of working class people, we were also taught to be on the lookout for middle class people with pretensions to being upper middle class. Upper middle class people talk and use language, dress, eat food, etc., etc., in particular upper middle class ways of which we are very aware. We are taught to notice when other people don't get it right, subtly limiting the extent to which we are then willing to get close to them. In this way, our relationships are monitored, and the ground is prepared to ensure that we marry people only from our own social class. My aunt married a working class man; years after he was dead, I can remember my parents' embarrassment and unease when my aunt dared to refer to her husband in a conversation with me as "your Uncle Tom." She had committed the ultimate offence by marrying outside her social class and it was much better not spoken about. I once asked to whom a certain friend had become engaged to be married. "Nobody at all," was the disgusted reply. It simply meant that person was marrying someone who was not upper middle class.

The other side of these patterns is the sense of obligation, responsibility and duty which goes with being upper middle class. There is the heavy expectation that we will contribute to society; this means taking responsibility and leadership, being willing to take initiatives and delivering the goods. To the extent that we take great pride in who we are, we can discharge all the patterned elements in our conditioning. When we do, we shall find ourselves free to take really intelligent initiatives and, together with our middle and working class allies, deliver the goods in a completely different and much more human way.

Christopher Spence
London, England

(reprinted from the So. England Region Men's Newsletter)



Lon: for a young friend on his birthday

Lon!
You're beautiful!
A snowball thrown, touching my coat,
then my heart and melting.

the furry bear, crawling across the rug and
onto my lap, warming the wet creases of my eyes.

the actor whose excitement in his own ruse
captivates me, the audience, into a standing ovation.

the wild spy, trying to grab the secret information
that all the time is inside and within reach.

A Rodin statue, "The Boy," that comes to life
and isn't frightened of its own beauty.

a retired scientific philosopher
who I meet by accident,
who shares precious insights into
how the world works with me.

Lon. You're beautiful.

-- Chuck Esser

Dear Men,

A friend gave me Vol. No. 1 of your MEN journal. I read it cover to cover and was energized and inspired to reclaim my dignity and self-esteem as a man. Thanks for a truly fine job.

Lou Mulieri
Hinesburg, Vermont, USA

. . . I was thinking about the title, *Men*. What if it said something like:

MEN
a magazine for men of all ages

or

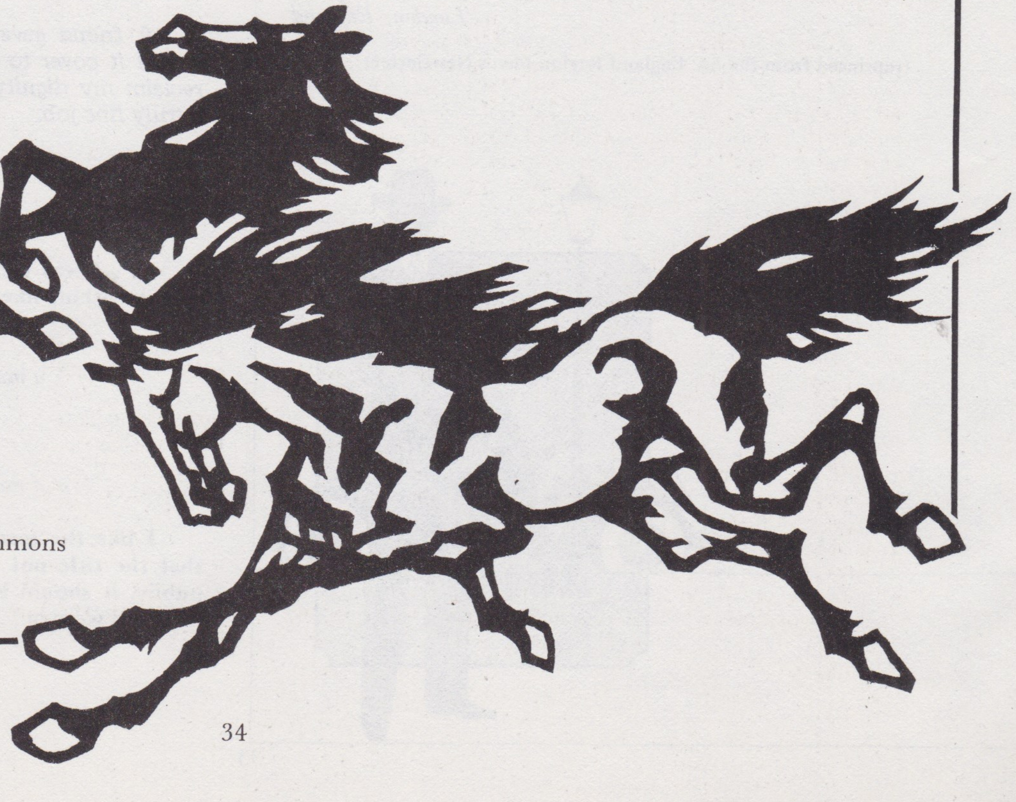
a magazine for all male people

I like the second one better. I think it is important that the title not shy anybody away. If it's going to go public, it should be real catchy to people on the streets, men and women . . .

Gregg Stock
Seattle, Washington, USA

FATHER AND SON ALLIES

by Keir Simmons and Michael Simmons



MIKE'S PART

One evening recently, after an hour of my behaving badly, Keir sorted me out and I saw just how brilliant and powerful he can be.

I have a piece of distress that I haven't dislodged, in which I dramatise angry feelings when I feel let down—"What about me?" a voice cries inside, but outside I'm shouting and telling everyone off, especially when alone with young people.

On this particular evening, the dog ran off, the elder chickens were attacking the young ones, and Mika (my daughter) and I were having a row because of my inflexibility. After physically attacking all the chickens to get them to stop attacking one another (well, you know patterns!), I strode back into the house, feeling awful and ready for the next fight.

"Sit down; how are you feeling?" was Keir's strongly delivered question. He sat in front of me and I cried for fifteen minutes. Half-way through I stopped and asked him if he was alright, and he replied that I should go first, and when I felt better, he would take his turn. On I went, crying and shaking—"What about me?" I said. "Again," said Keir. "What about me?" I said again. "Again," said Keir. When he gives a direction, he is utterly ruthless in keeping you to it until the discharge actually stops.

Once the feelings began to lift and my attention came up again, I invited Keir to talk. He immediately leapt onto my lap and cried for a good half hour about how he feels when older people shout at him and other young-people.

He is a fine model of a man for me, seeing his powerful concern, his ability to confront and deal with my dramatisation, and his wonderful clienting.

KEIR'S PART

I came in. Daddy told me to go upstairs to get my pyjamas on; then I heard Daddy shouting at Mika. I went downstairs and listened. The kitchen door was closed, so I listened from there. I heard Daddy shouting at Mika, and so I decided I was going to do something about it. After Mika went upstairs crying; I went into the kitchen and saw a chair that was not tucked under the table.

I said to Daddy, "Sit down." He sat down. I brought a chair from the table and sat down too. Then I said, "How are you feeling?" and he burst into tears. Then I said again,"How are you feeling?" and he said that he was feeling terrible. I think he felt like he was very sad and in the middle of everything and nobody loved him.

Then he asked me if I wanted some time, but I told him to carry on. He carried on. I said, "What was good for you?" He said, "Nothing."

When he had finished, he gave me some time and I cried. Then he went upstairs and he said sorry to Mika and we all hugged each other.

I think that if every child did that, the world would be fantastic.

COMBATTING SEXISM

WOMEN TALK TO MEN

(Edited tape transcripts of a Regional Men's Workshop, Brewster, New York – December, 1979)

Women addressed the men on these issues: 1) What it's like for them as women; 2) What they require of men in relation to women, other men, making the world right; 3) What kind of counseling is needed from men; how men can be effective counselors for women; what feelings come up for women in relation to men and get in the way with men; how men can provide the balance of safety, contradiction, and restimulation with the woman client in charge, working as a team.

KATY STEVENS:

I'm going to tell you what it was like to grow up as Katy. I have notes in my pocket that I'll take out. I've thought well about this and I don't want to forget anything.

I grew up with three older brothers. The way I got attention in my family was to be cute—I've always been cute—to be weak, to cry, and to tease and manipulate. I don't ever remember getting attention because I thought well or because I could figure things out. This has made thinking feel hard to me. It still feels as though thinking is very hard for me. I have to work at thinking. Many men don't know what that's like at all.

Being cute served me well for a long time. I was always the cheerleader. It was easy. But when I ran for vice-president of the student council in high school, (and one of the major ways you were judged was by the speech you gave), I probably gave a better speech than any of the other people. They elected two of the guys in my class and not me. I don't think I realized then what was going on, but I think I know now.

A second thing: I didn't feel like anyone had any expectations for me. I don't remember once anybody asking me what I was going to do. Not only was I not pushed to reach for the stars and to succeed, but nobody asked. I think about going through school, going through college: I don't ever remember anyone asking me what I wanted to do, not even advisers who were supposed to help me think about my future. I wasn't sure what they were assuming, but they weren't asking. And when I graduated from college, I didn't know either. It took me a long time after that to realize that I didn't know what I wanted to do. And now when I have the opportunity to take positions of leadership or more responsibility, I get confused. Do I really want to do that? Is that what I want for my life? Or is that just what society says I should do?

Am I just playing in to the message that people should always move up and climb the ladder? Am I just buying into that? Or am I not doing it because I am scared, and I've not been encouraged as a woman to seek positions of responsibility? It's hard for me to think clearly about what I want. I get confused whether it's that being a woman I haven't been allowed to aspire to those positions or that it's a choice that I don't want to buy into.

The third area is in terms of sexuality. That's been the hardest area for me and the one in which I have the most resentment toward men. I felt like I could always get what I wanted. I could always have the boyfriend that I wanted. It wasn't until much later that I realized what had been going on all that time, and why I had been getting what I wanted. I have had so many experiences of being in a situation that I trusted and felt comfortable in, and then the man involved would start acting less than human, seeing me in sexual terms. It's happened with bosses, landlords, and others. I had a landlord who was really nice; and we'd talk about watching baseball together and laugh a lot. One weekend his wife went away, and he invited me over. People say to me, "K–, you can't be too nice, you have to be careful or you'll be misinterpreted." I want to be decent and nice to men and not antagonize them, but my being nice to them is always taken differently than men being nice to them. Suddenly I'd get cards asking where I lived. I need to ask men in counseling to be aware of that at all times. Sometimes hugging or ways of touching can bring up that same feeling of being a victim. There are a lot of women who carry that fear around. Ask us what's best for us; we know. Not you . . . No matter how strongly you feel about that.

What information do you need to know? I went through a stage where I felt like you (men) were the enemy. It didn't last long, but for some reason it was important in getting me to how I feel now, which is able to see men as allies. Getting at my hatred was an important part of the process for me; getting at the hurt and rage that had been put on me and that I had then proceeded to put on myself. We have to move through that and not stay stuck there. Otherwise, that's just being a victim. Hate is just a signal of massive hurt that needs to be discharged. Don't fall into defensiveness and guilt and hating yourselves. Help us out with it. We're learning to do that with one another.

Requirements: Learn to listen to women without being defensive. Encourage my learning, and give me information that I need, and then let me do it, particularly in areas that I have never been encouraged in. Ask my opinion about everything, and wait for my answer. It might take a few minutes. Don't think I don't have an opinion just because I don't answer you right away or I need to discharge in the process of thinking.

Believe in me; believe in my potential—not in a patronizing way. Continue to meet like this with other men, turn to other men for nurturance. Stop sexism in other men; don't get caught up interrupting our internalized sexism because it's easier than interrupting sexism in other men. When you're thinking of working out with someone, getting in shape, think about doing that with women. We love to be strong too.

I need you to strive to be like I am. I want you to use me as a model. I want you to look to me as one of your heroes. Look at my triumphs. I want you to strive to combine the kind of strength I have with the vulnerability.

continued . . .

continued . . .

(Takes time for discharge; cries and laughs and cries)

I've hardly ever told anyone what to do, about anything. You do it all the time. The other thing is, it's great to be female. I have such wonderful women friends. I'm so proud of us. It's wonderful to be with you all (men), and this is OK, that you're listening, and that you care. It's absolutely terrifying up here. Whew.

I hope you're working as hard at this as I am. (Sobs)

As counselors, you need to be patient. I don't need to be told what to do. That's sexism and adultism combined. Don't hug me when I'm crying unless I tell you to. Listen first. That will make it safest for me . . . when I know you are really going to listen, despite all your feelings.

This is incredible: I can say anything and you're listening to me!!

JOY VOTAW:

You all LOOK OK! (group laughter) It feels to me like sexism and learning are all mixed up. I'm trying to separate out everything that is keeping me from thinking. I don't know that I'm going to be able to do this. My worst fear is coming true (struggles to discharge the terror). I'll start with growing up. I think I was raised to be what I am at this point—a mother, a housewife. (This is awful, I can't believe this.) Organization, getting it all together—THINK! I'm trying to figure out "the system." I'm a forty-year-old woman who's had one kind of life and I'm shifting over into another. I come up against feelings about going into the world. I go out and make contact and think and force myself to stay out there against the fear, and then something hits. I come home and I hit the bottom. I realize I don't know the language. I don't know the kinds of behaviors and words to fit in. Have you ever watched and listened to yourselves being men in a man's world together? I think that has something to do with me being a woman, and you all being men.

The hard thing about being a woman for me and how that affects my life right now is that I have been raised to do everything for everybody. I'm really good at that. What's difficult now is that I'm all over the place. It's important for me to focus in on something, and I come head-on with the fact that I don't know how to do that. I feel all this confusion because I don't know how to figure it out, or even whether I should figure it out, whether there's really anything to figure out besides patterns. I feel very diffuse. When I come up against professional men, my feeling of not being able to think multiplies ten-fold over what is there all the time. I feel like I'm supposed to know all these professional words and jargon, and you act as though I'm dumb if I don't know. A woman friend of mine once said, "J—, let's face it: you'll never be able to get it." I took that as such a compliment! I could give up on that nonsense. I don't have to fit into the way things are already set up, in order to be powerful, smart, or competent. I already am, on my terms, not yours. Your terms are meant to leave me out. But I'm trained to include you (men), even to put you first while you're trained to leave me out . . . .

Part of being out in the world is how I look. Women get a lot of attention for looking a certain way—the upwardly mobile look. This gave me the message that whatever I was, wasn't OK. One of the things that happened to me in high school was that having to look a certain way set up a lot of competition and divisiveness between women. Who looked best, had the best figure, attracted the best men, the works . . . .

I felt there were no expectations of me, that my life was a foregone conclusion. It was important that I marry somebody who could support me and take care of me, and to make choices based on that. A lot of my life was seeing men in my life hurting, feeling that I needed to do something to make that better. I remember my father came to me. He was being accused by my mother of being with another woman, and he was hurt by that.

It feels like my thinking has to be in neat, complete boxes, you know. That if I get confused, nobody will listen to me, nobody will be there. That gets scary, with all the impatient men around jumping in or taking over or leaving in one way or another.

My brother eventually left home. We haven't seen him in ten years. It was about men having to be a particular way, fit in a particular mold. He couldn't fit that; he had to leave. I feel responsible, but I couldn't do anything about that. I always feel responsible.

I remember when in sixth grade I would tell people what I would do when I got older. They all said of course you're not going to be able to do that. And I didn't. The rules were set for me.

I want your help. I have been doing a lot by myself. I require you to do your work, to do whatever it takes, to help me out. That will be for you. You're usually too scared to look, to let yourself be vulnerable and open to what it's like for you, to the feelings you carry that rarely get raised to the surface yet affect you all the time. My survival and yours depend on it. It is important that you see me and treat me as someone with no limits.

I found out that men say a lot more words. I found out that I could say things that mattered with fewer words. That's it!

CAROL FLIPOWITZ:

You all look so beautiful. It's amazing to get this kind of attention from men. It makes me realize how little real attention I've had from men in my life.

There are so many little things that signal the big hurts. Notice how many times your women friends say I'm sorry and apologize when they didn't do anything wrong. Notice how much you interrupt them and assume you know the answer to things more than they do, and assume you're right in any case. Notice how the fear in women makes them say what they know in the form of questions rather than statements.

When I was younger, I cried a lot and had temper tantrums a lot; my father told me that he would listen to me when I calmed down. It was as though I couldn't be crying and thinking at the same time, that the only time my words were valid was when I wasn't crying.

I was never encouraged to use my body or be physically strong. I'm also short, and I really notice the difference between me and a six-foot-five man. You might have to slow down sometimes, just walk slower, so that you can be with me, so that I don't always have to be expected to meet your pace because you're faster, or bigger, or louder. At the same time, I want you to encourage me to be strong. That's not a contradiction in terms.

There are a lot of things that women haven't been able to have, like high positions in business organizations. You have to compete and step on people. It's confusing when those positions start being open to us, and we have the chance to do things that we have never been able to do before. Yet a lot of competitive, hierarchical structures are destructive. We are aware that this is wrong, and want the power without having to hurt others, or get hurt. It's hard for us to reject those positions because we've never had them, but we can see them for what they are. A lot of women go through a lot of self-hate around this. They want to achieve, and yet the kind of achievement that is held out also hurts other people. We can feel guilty and confused about that. We don't find organizations which are run with respect for people above profit, or even listen to people well. It seems that going from the bottom to the top means putting other people on the bottom and we women don't want that. There is an awful lot of pressure to do it, too.

It's hard for me to take power because of the connotations around power. It's as though being powerful and being a human being are different. Women see men as being powerful and non-human and women want the power while retaining their humanness. There don't seem to be many available models for that, to say the least. The apparent opposition between the two is part of the myth that keeps people powerless and fearful of their power.

When women get angry, don't pull back, yell back, or get defensive. I know it's not easy, but be there. My anger is not going to destroy you. I am not your mother and you are not a little boy. It doesn't mean that I don't love you. Let me be angry. You'll survive. You have a lot to be angry about, too, I'm sure. Recognize that the way I may be attacking you is the way that I've been hurt (usually by men) trying to come off. Don't punch it back in. It may, in fact, be something you've done to me or to other women. You need to get free of the hurt inside you that makes you do these things that hurt us. Don't treat us when we're discharging the way you had your discharge interrupted and suppressed!

Another thing that has hurt me and other women a lot is not being able to be friends with other women, not trusting other women, thinking men come first. We've been taught not to value ourselves and to devalue one another. We don't expect and count on other women to be smart or strong. Respect our friendships with other women. They are very important. Don't run your jealousy or suspicion at me. Make some intimate male friends of your own. A man told me the other day that women can't work together because they always end up fighting about petty little things. That's a myth I need you not to encourage.

About touch: ask before you touch me. Don't think that you're using sex to express your love if it doesn't pay attention to where I am, if it doesn't include me and include yourself. Ask about how our bodies work. Don't be disgusted about our periods. Tell us about how your bodies work. We want to know. Learn how to love each other as men, and turn to each other for support. It's important to give women space to be powerful in other ways than taking care of you, especially when you're hurting out of your own powerlessness. Think about that, next time you're hurting. Think about turning to men, and what you would have to change to do that. Women feel that we're the only ones who know how to take care of people, including men. That has to change. That sets us up to either be living our lives for others or feeling terribly guilty. Why don't you trust other men? You'll run into the same difficulties we do, but maybe you'll do something about it when you are subjected to it, and when we stop taking care of you. You'll be the victims of your own sexist conditioning, and hate it enough to change things, hopefully.

I also want you to know that it's not the end of the world if I should happen to hurt you accidentally. You have the tools to deal with it. That's me trying to get out of the constant and internalized oppression that is restimulated daily. You can do something about that, too.

Make it clear to a woman when you're working with her, or teaching her, that the reason she doesn't understand is because she never had the information, or was told all the time that she was stupid. Make it clear that she is capable and intelligent, and simply needs the information that she doesn't have. Don't do things for me. Let women know what it was like for you to first learn things. You can get in touch with when you didn't know, were vulnerable, or what it's like having to pretend you know everything.

Another thing women feel in relationships, especially sexual relationships, is that the woman is the one responsible for whether or not it goes well, for doing the thinking and taking the initiative to talk about it, spend time together, work things out. It's time for you men to do that.

Are you really listening? (Notices the attention and cries)

There are so many things we feel so alone with. The isolation is twofold: from other women; we can't admit something we're having trouble with since we're afraid we're less of a woman by not being perfect. We're scared to talk to men because they usually don't care or don't listen. We often don't talk to one another as women about sex or our sexuality because we feel that there must be something wrong with us, that it's our fault. A lot of times we don't have enough information about our sexuality, or it's distorted, or we don't get support and attention from the men we're with. That affects our sexuality. We need to know it's OK that we're not sure what we want. I need you to spend time, to take the time with me so that I can find out what I want or need sexually. You don't really know any more than I do for yourself. We need to talk about menstrual periods, abortion, and birth control. When I had an abortion I felt like it was my fault, that I was a failure, that I was stupid, that I should have done more to prevent pregnancy. I'd better not admit that to anyone or everybody would call me a dumb girl. That's scary to deal with. You've got to listen to my fear and anger.

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The woman is the one who is having this done to her body, not you. Don't back off in your own fear. I can imagine that that holds true for all stages of pregnancy and birth. As men, you need to show that you'll listen to all the pain, fear, and insecurity that the woman is feeling. Then get somebody to listen to you, especially another man.

Stop blaming us for your problems. It's not our fault, nor is it yours. You're so hard on yourselves. Stop putting that on us. I also want to tell you not to give up. Don't give up on yourselves. I'm so glad you're all here. It's good that you are here, doing this. Keep telling your women friends what you appreciate about them. Keep telling your fathers that you love them.

CHERY CUTLER:

I have waited all my life for this! (loud laughter) No kidding! First, I want to say that I really love men, and I always have, and I still do. And you know what that took. I'll tell you what I always wanted. I wanted to be able to wrestle you, belly to belly, with my whole force. I wanted you to be able to pin me down with your whole force and say, "That's good!" or "That's not right!" Then I wanted to be able to do the same back and not have you say, "Oops, game's changed, rule's changed, sorry." And then run away. I felt a lot of longing all my life for men. A lot of longing for close, strong, equal, wrestling contact. A lot of longing for that really hot blood, and respect. Most of my life I felt disappointed, frustrated, angry, and hopeful. That's why I'm so delighted to be able to tell you this because I think you can take it! I know you're not fragile, not as fragile certainly as you act, or think you are. There's only one man in my life that I have been able to do this with, and I consider myself extraordinarily lucky.

Now I'm going to tell you something hard. I feel that most men's thinking is pretty inferior, because it's not connected to your heart, and therefore not to reality. That would be hard as it is, but what's difficult to deal with is that men think their thinking is superior. That's what makes it hard. If you just said, "Yes, I guess I'm not too connected!" then I would say, "Yeah, you're not, but I really love you and there are lots of places where I don't have it together either, but let's work them out with each other." But instead, most of my life with most of the men I've known, they invalidate me when I'm expressing something with feeling. For instance, I was in a committee meeting a couple of months ago. People were very tense, very angry, and I didn't understand why. I said, "I don't understand what the issue is here. It seems very straightforward, but there are lots of feelings in this room. Why is everybody so scared and angry?" Then I told the way I was feeling, what I understood, and what the issues were for me.

Others there said to me, very angrily, "Nothing is going on, no one has any feelings here. What are you talking about?" It was ludicrous. I felt that they were saying I wasn't together, that my thinking was inferior, that I was being weak and sloppy. Why didn't I get myself together and be tough and strong and smart? But I was being tough and strong and smart; tougher and stronger and smarter than they were. That's what's hard. If they were to say, "Gee, you have a lot of guts to bring that up. I didn't and none of us did. OK, let's deal." Then I would have said, "Boy do I respect you!" And I would respect them, these men. What's hard is to love men and not respect them. It's very important to be able to respect who you love.

Men don't stick it out through the last round. They run off before the game is over. That's been frustrating and disappointing. A lot of my distress is wrapped up in what I expected men to be that they couldn't possibly give me. Only I could give myself that. When I was little, when people said that I didn't do things right, that what I did was bad or wrong, and that I was bad—I thought to myself that if I agreed that I was bad, they would feel better. They would love me, because I made them feel better and they seemed to need me to say I was bad. So I learned to say "I stand corrected," a lot of times; sometimes when it wasn't even true. What was hard was not that I did something which was not right, but that I felt that I was bad. That got real deep inside and started being the place where I don't let men in, especially sexually. That got to be a private place because it was where I couldn't separate myself from the hurt. That's where I'm really vulnerable: where I can't separate myself from what I do that's not right (or hurtful) is where I can't protect myself, so it feels. I'm vulnerable there. That's my private part.

If I know somebody loves me, and I trust him, he'll separate me from my hurt. That's when I can let a man in sexually. When he can say or show that he sees my distress and sees that it isn't me; when he can see me clearly for who I am, then I can let him in. I can trust him even where it's difficult to trust myself completely. For me, that's what sex is; that's what intimacy is. Who among you men can do this, for yourselves, say nothing of for anyone else?

I don't know what all these people are doing with sex, but I don't think it could be for what I think it really should be. That takes a lot of trust. Trust is essential. I have to respect the man not to attack me because I'm scared, or because he's scared, but to assist me with the stuff I've taken in that is not me. He needs to have the guts to attack the stuff and to love me at the same time, not to mix them up. He needs to be able to say, "I stand corrected," with honor, rather than defensiveness, or guilt.

A lot of men don't have that honor. I'll tell you why: because all these things inside about life and love and truth that you're born with get jammed in and numbed away. One time I was out by the reservoir where we live. There was a little boy about five standing by the water looking out. He said, with his little belly hanging out, "What a BEAUTIFUL day!" The women who were standing by said, "Did you hear what that boy said? Oh, that's ridiculous!" They began to put him down and make fun of him. He looked up at them, and I thought, that is where it starts. He wasn't allowed that because he was a boy. Women get jammed with what men are supposed to be, too, and treat their sons that way. That's where men start leaving me, where you were taken from your own connections to life and love and truth and yourselves; right where you weren't and aren't allowed to have that for yourselves, these simple basic things.

When that is taken away, when one is not allowed to feel his love, his vital life, then he ceases to have sap running in his veins. The inner self becomes like a branch that has no sap—it is easily broken. That's why you run away. At least that's what I think. (laughter) You're so great (shouts of joy). You don't have to believe me, you know (cheers and laughter).

What I'm interested in is allowing men to love, to feel that vitality, and to be tender. I know that that's where men are going to be strong. I know you're not allowed to make contact with that much of the time, but that's what's strong enough for me, and you must.

I want you. Really. I need you. But I'm not going to wait for you or coddle you.

It's very important to me that you trust one another. I don't find that you do that very well. I'll tell you another thing. It has been hard for me in my experience with men to see you hurt things that are living. This is very hard for me. I remember sitting on a beach a couple of years ago. There was a man there talking to me about the little crabs. He said that in his country they used the shells to put on their walls for ornaments. He said, "Here, I'll take this shell off this crab and give it to you for your wall." And I asked him not to do that, that I'd rather the crab lived and that I didn't want it for my wall. "Oh, it's real easy," he said. And he ripped the shell off the crab, handed it to me, and the crab died. This happens a lot in a number of ways with men. I can hardly tell you how I feel about that.

Something went wrong there that he could do that. He should have felt the same way I did. Lots of men in my life seem to think it's OK to hurt life or to kill it for fun. They hurt each other a lot, too. If you listen to yourselves (and maybe you do), you ridicule one another all the time. You don't realize you're hurting each other constantly, keeping each other down that way, and hurting constantly yourselves to have to do that in the first place. Something vital is being killed that way. When I see men hurting one another, I know that they're not going to be strong enough to deal with me. I don't want that happening. I don't want you to ever think that to not hurt life is weak or to hurt it is strong or manly. That's where the center is, yours included. If you want to be strong, then you support life and you support love. Don't think that to do anything that isn't supportive of life and love is strong, because it is not. You may have been told that love will make you weak. I think it is the source of your power. That's why you're so powerless. You don't know how to love; it's been taken away from you. You don't know how to stand up for what's right. You don't love who you are. I know, because I've tried to wrestle a lot of men. Inside they seem hollow. The sap is there but it's numb and not flowing anymore.

There was a guy who liked asparagus a lot, and he planted an asparagus patch. It didn't come up the first year. He thought it might come up the second year. It didn't come up the second year. So he decided to put in a blacktop over it and make a garage in his backyard. He laid the blacktop over what was to have been the asparagus patch to get to his garage. The third year the asparagus came up and smashed the blacktop to smithereens! That is what you have to do to meet me and be my equal!

Those little asparagus sprouts—they have it. That's the power of the world. You have to believe in those little things when they first start with their life. It's like that with women. We get pregnant, and a life grows and grows and is born. You look at it and you think, "Ah, this is too small. Its head is too big, its legs too short, it's sort of weak—how's it gonna make it!!??" (laughter) You have to support life—children, animals, and all growing things. It's important to support one another when one is trying in little big ways to come out; to give people the love and time and patience to grow, since that's the only essential thing that's happening that there is, after all. Don't give up on yourself or anybody else because the growth or progress seems so small. You're starting, and you're glorious.

I can tell you the kind of support you'll feel from women as you start. We know, and we'll be right there, real proud of you.

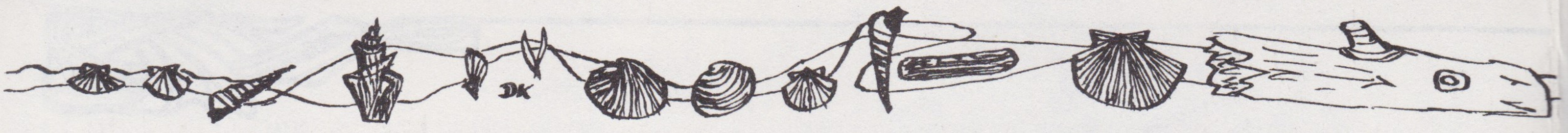
See, women started down. We didn't have the pretend power to get rid of first. So it has been easier to see that something has to change, that something isn't right. Your life has got to come around. There's no holding it back any longer. I respect you for getting free. I respect you for coming here to work. I know what this must take.

If women were everything, and men not, I would have given up on you long ago. You see, it seems that women almost are everything; but I really won't do without you. I would if I could. But you're here, with me, for a reason. We've got a lot of work to do, separately and together, to heal this planet, to get back on track with life and love as the most important things.

I don't want to see you putting each other down. I want you to have something much bigger than that for your support. It takes a lot of strength to go inside to your core. Women are learning to do that for one another, and for ourselves. You must as well. Nobody can do it for you. We, as women, thought we had to do it for you, at our own expense. No more. It doesn't work. It doesn't work for us and it doesn't work for you that way. When I see you here doing so beautifully, and hear you crying together, encouraging each other to take full power and pride, I think how you're cracking through that blacktop, and are going to make it. You must place your thinking over things that are anti-life, not over people, not with a superiority that destroys life in any way. You will have superior thinking when you are humble, loving, gentle, and firm against wrongdoing—that's your strength, not your weakness. By "humble" I don't mean self-effacing, but honorable. To be able to say, "I stand corrected. I have something here that needs to change," rather than blame women automatically while we feel responsible for everything.

Also, celebrate and play. Get rid of that silly stiff exterior that got put on you. You have a lot of work to do around succeeding. It's important to realize that there's a much bigger game going on than the field you may think you're in. The little games will succeed only when the bigger one does—when you are in contact with life, love, your own goodness. You don't need to think badly of yourselves, ever. I think that the love you are starting to express toward one another is glorious.

I'm real proud of these women with me. It took me a long time way back in my life to be proud of women. I thought we were not too smart, not very strong, and didn't have much to say. We're glorious! You treat us that way! (Men cheer, laugh, and cry.)



Explaining Sexism To A Male Friend

Dear D.

What a great letter! It was next best to having a long chat with you; say in front of the fireplace, or lying side by side in bed. It's hard to respond fully to the thoughts and questions in your letter about the book, The Women's Room. The book is one of the most complete presentations I've seen on how sexism operates and its effects on women. That was certainly the main theme of the book. Particularly as it effects the women of my, our, generation (forty to fifty years old). Many women here at school have read/are reading it and virtually all of them say, "it's my story." These women are not particularly political, or radical, or even very sophisticated. Middle American is what they mostly are. But the exposition of how crippling the effects of sexism are on women was/is right on. It is the results of that crippling that leaves the main character Mira unable to have the reaction (to the blasted relationship with Ben) you would wish for her; to say, "Wow, a new opportunity," etc., you might as well ask someone whose nervous system has been shattered by a land mine to leap out of her/his wheelchair and run. Mira's admission to Ben near the end of the book that she didn't know what she wanted for her life; that she'd long ago given up knowing what she wants until she knows what she can get. That sounds all too familiar to me; I've formulated the thought and said those words many times myself when trying to set goals for myself.

I've come to realize that that is one of the most insidious effects of sexism. We (women) are trained from the day we are born to serve others, to please, to put others' needs ahead of our own. Our mothers modeled that for us, as did virtually all other women who were important to us. We began by trying to please our fathers, were criticized for being "willful" if and when we were assertive, were warned against selfishness as a trait that would make us very disliked (and hence lonely). Most of us dreamed of finding someone (a man) who would love us, care for and take care of us in ways that most of our fathers did not. Somehow it seemed that the proof of our worth, of our being "okay," would be shown by finding such a loving caretaker. If we "deserved" it, it would happen. If it didn't happen that way, then somehow, it was because we were lacking some quality which we ought to have. Many of us were forced into the myth without ever fully examining it or ever really deciding whether or not it made sense. It is important to realize that it is not our fault; no alternate model was presented to most of us.

Lots of times when women talk about sexism, there is a lot of blaming of men involved. It certainly seems like someone has to be to blame, and as it begins to dawn on us that it is not our fault, there is a tendency to decide that it must be the fault of the men. I think Marilyn French's analysis is lacking in her understanding of men and why they are "that way." She tries but just doesn't have sufficient information or understanding. So, she gives up on them and scapegoats them as the enemy. I do not think that is a correct position to take. It does not make sense in terms of what I believe to be true about how we humans operate. Sexism is another form of oppression which has come to be a cultural practice and has operated in society for a long time. There are lots of interesting theories of how it started and why, but the present reality is that it operates in a systematic way. Both men and women operate within this system and help to perpetuate it. Because all of us were hurt and oppressed as children (adultism is another widespread cultural pattern of oppression), and because we were prevented from getting rid of those hurts as they accrued, none of us can think very clearly about what exactly is wrong or what to do about it. We probably all start out with a clear sense of how things ought to be in our world, how we can act humanly to one another and delight in our diversities. Without an opportunity to discharge on the hurts we have suffered, we gradually stop insisting on things going right, finally give in and accept this distorted system as reality.

Men are undoubtedly damaged by the effects of sexism. Men's roles become nearly as rigid and circumscribed as women's. Male patterns emerge as the economic caretakers, unemotional, unfeeling, courageous, brave, risk-taking, fearless, intellectual, sexually aggressive – all the traits we refer to as "manly." These oppose the traditional female patterns of emotional, weak, dependent, nurturing, docile, passive, non-intellectual, uncomplaining, fearful. Mothers, as well as fathers, model and program their youngsters, male and female, to follow these characteristics and continue to be that way. Whenever an individual man or woman tries to break out of that and act differently, there's likely to be a big crunch with his/her close ones and society in general. Most women and men do not go against that training very long or very successfully unless they get lots of support and opportunity to discharge all the feelings it brings up.

What needs to happen? One very important phase of a whole process is for men to listen to women talk about how it has been for them to grow up in a world where they have been treated as objects. Women have traditionally been the listeners, to one another and to their men. Men need to contradict the feeling that women are not supposed to "complain" for fear of losing their men. Men need to hear how it's been for women, and women need to tell it. It will undoubtedly bring up all sorts of feelings, and that is the most crucial aspect of the whole process of turning things around toward freeing women (and men) of the crippling effects of sexism. Feeling those feelings in a safe place will enable discharge to occur, and men and women can reclaim their innate abilities to interact in more human ways. Women need to discharge the hurt and invalidation we've experienced from men and each other; men need to discharge the hurt and sorrow they've experienced from being the recipients of adultist oppression and the agents of sexist oppression on women. A further contradiction to the old system is for men to discharge to other men, to begin to experience the nurturing of one another, instead of depending primarily on women for emotional support. Giving support to and receiving support from other men are invaluable steps out of men's distress. Men therefore need to listen to women delightedly, no matter how bad it feels, then take those feelings and discharge them to other men who will also listen delightedly. I know that the process works well and enables us to begin to see one another more clearly again, as equals, allies, instead of one another's Mother/Father/caretaker. As women continue to discharge our grief and anger, we can and do move away from the blaming stance that is so hard to listen to at first. We don't really want to blame, but since at first it seems like it's our fault that we were/are treated badly, often the first steps out of self-blame are toward blaming someone else. Women internalize the oppression so thoroughly, that it is hard for us to trust ourselves or one another until we can begin to unload the hurt.

It's very scary to give up the notion that it is our fault, because if it is their fault instead, feeling all that rage and resentment at them is terrifying. We don't know yet that we can take care of ourselves, and it seems as though we need them in order to know that we're okay. But if it's their fault and we're very angry about that and we let them know that, they will leave us for sure and then where will we be? Many, many women bail out at this point and stop thinking about it. It feels too hard and too scary and we poke it all back down and pretend it's not there. Other women get stuck in this phase of outer-directed anger and blame and take a rigid "the men are the enemy" stand. Some of the rest of us intrepid (and fortunate) ones keep on truckin' and discharging and move on through the muck and the mire. It takes a lot of support, guts, and time. As far as I can see, it's the only game in town. I'm damned if I'll stay in this stuff, and fortunately, I have excellent female and male counselors to assist me to keep looking at it and feeling it and discharging the feelings.

In line with all that, I am so pleased that you read The Women's Room in the first place, shared with me your interest in it, and specifically asked me for my reactions to it. It might not have occurred to me to lay out all these thoughts to you otherwise. In light of the many (splendored) phases of our relationship, this is an important area for us to deal with. This is a real application, in microcosm, of the process described above. Thanks for asking for it! (Did you realize what you were "asking" for?)

Back to The Women's Room for a bit. When Ben and Mira found themselves in that impasse over the trip to Africa and Ben's assumption that, of course, she would be there because he wanted her to be, and Mira's outrage at Ben assuming anything at all (without checking it out) about what Mira would perceive to be in her own best interest, they both needed a chance to be listened to -- to feel the feelings, to cry, to rage, to shake, until they could think again. They were both good people doing the best they could; they weren't enemies; they were both caught in a system that they couldn't understand. But they could not make sense of it without discharging, so they gave up on one another. That is too bad; they had the potential for really celebrating their humanities together.

As for why Mira can't be "cool" over the endings of relationships, remember that women (in general) are programmed from birth to hope for a permanent situation of being cared for and loved; that our worth as women is shown and proven by our ability to "catch and keep" a man. Of course, that doesn't make sense, but we (by and large) have been forced to buy it, and few of us have had the space to figure out that it doesn't make sense until it hasn't worked out, and then we feel like failures.

As for you, dear friend, you've done rather better than many of your male comperes. You've retained much of your humanity. You are loving and affectionate and caring, you try to understand how it is with yourself and others. I appreciate you very much. But just as none of us white folks have remained free of racism in this white dominated culture, you have not totally escaped the infection of sexism. Just as I have become adultist in the way I treat children (only because I

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have not yet discharged all the hurt I got as a child) and have internalized lots of sexist oppression so that I put myself and my sisters down, so have you picked up sexist attitudes and practices. It's not your fault that happened to you; there's no way of escaping it, save discharging every bit of hurt you receive as you go along. It is, however, your responsibility to become aware of those attitudes and practices and discharge the hurt behind them and stop doing them. One sexist manifestation is your judgment of how women feel and act and your disappointment that they don't react as you do, or as it would be "rational" for them to react. To criticize women for envy and insecurity is to ignore the causes of those (admittedly unattractive) phenomena. To see women first as sexual objects is insulting to our essential humanity even when we feel flattered by such attention. I am not blaming you for these attitudes; they are so prevalent in our culture you could not have avoided picking them up. But you owe it to yourself to rid yourself of them, for they interfere with your basic essence of full humanhood.

Again, I am pleased that you asked me to think about all this and tell it to you; it encourages my hope that things will get better between men and women in general and you and me in particular, that you have asked to hear how it is for us women. Our experiences are varied and individual, but there are many commonalities.

Sexist attitudes keep men apart from one another too. Homophobia makes them assume - and fear - that closeness and intimacy means sex, that it's only normal to feel those feelings for a woman, that it's weak and unmasculine to relate closely to one another. Men stand to gain just as much as women do from the elimination of sexist junk.

I love you, D, and look forward to hearing your thoughts on all this.

Muriel Edgerton
Ambler, Pennsylvania, USA

Poem for Susan on Leaving Philadelphia

Let's go out and let evening roll into our lungs.
Your life is poised,
ready for exhalation,
eager to breathe again
a new valley.

You shun nothing, nothing of the old --
everything remembered and cherished,
like old friends. Their loves still speak
with faces of their own that at some time
we touched and held.

You shun nothing, nothing of the new --
the spark of the not-quite-discernable
is in your eye.

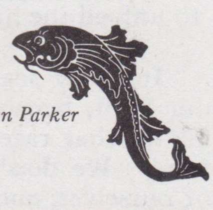
You remind me of a bluejay
leaving its branch with a clear cry,
cutting through the glen
between two hills
above the lake,
with the clouds above and below it.
The clear cry bounces back once more,
till the last blaze of its wings
turns the afternoon away. Good-bye, good-bye.
It waits for new branches somewhere else,
never doubts they are there. Hello, hello.

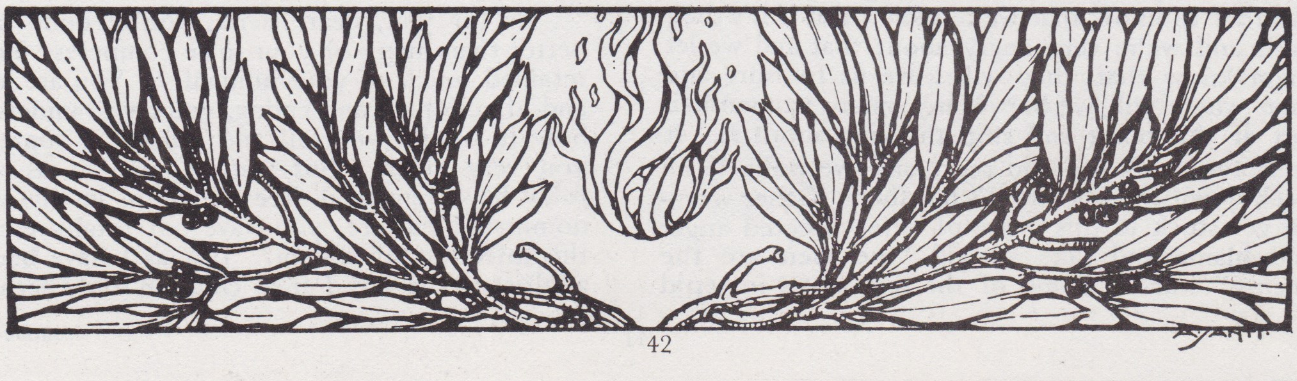
Every place you have been has been home
until home is a skill,
a way you make people feel.
The touch of familiar woodwork,
the smoothness of time and grace
and children's feet on the floors --
all these you recreate.

Each new place you find becomes home.
Suddenly the streets become logical.
The lines of the house appear, last image,
before sleep. Suddenly what was the present
appears in your dreams and is the past.

Dear Susan, let's say our good-byes to friends
we love and are leaving,
and go. Let's go together
among loved ones, somewhere strange,
and see how the times and each other's faces
change,
and stay the same.

Stephen Parker





WHAT WOMEN REQUIRE FROM MEN

(From a workshop transcript)

—*Teresa Weisglass*

MEN ARE OUR NATURAL ALLIES

Another important resource we can tap, and from which we have the right to expect a lot of support, is men. Men are our natural allies. They are humans just like we are; they have been hurt as children and as students, as workers and ethnic persons, in many similar ways. They have, in many instances, been denied access to their feelings through societal conditioning or ridiculed for acknowledging their emotions. We must never give up on men nor lose sight of their inherent humanness. (At the same time, we need not accomodate or be naive about the destructive behavior patterns that men as individuals and as a group sometimes act on.) We must be thoughtful, loving and supportive of boys and young men as they grow up and realize how confusing and hurtful it is for them to see the oppression being acted out by other males and appreciate how difficult it must be for them to counter that model presented by adults and encouraged through peer pressure as well.

Because we may sometimes feel as if men are not our allies, it is helpful to think back to different situations in which individual men have been our allies and tell each other about it. How have men been thoughtful of you, listened to your thinking, encouraged you and had goals for you, understood you and your struggle, taken up your struggle with you?

GROUP RESPONSES

--When I was about four or five years old, my Grandpa gave me a truck for my birthday. Even I thought it was kind of strange because, by that time, I was already conditioned to play with dolls. I asked him "Why?" and he said, "Well, why not!"

--I was climbing down the side of a deep river body in Israel and was terrified. There were all these men stationed along the way, helping me and telling me that I could do it. They were supportive the whole time.

--There was a man I knew before I got into co-counseling. He used to sit and appreciate me and listen to me cry.

--I needed some money once to leave one state. A previous boyfriend who wasn't a boyfriend anymore gave me $300 without any hassles.

--After I was in a serious car accident, a friend of mine took me in my car after it was repaired and made me drive right to the same place where the accident occurred and up to my home and to the parking lot and wouldn't let me get away without driving.

--My husband told me he thought the word love is a garbage word and didn't have any meaning anymore. Then he said, "I never say I love you anymore but what I feel for you I will tell you. I feel great tenderness and great gentleness and never want to hurt you." I think that is fantastic support.

--My friend listens to me and encourages and respects my thinking. He challenges me where we disagree and knows I am up to the challenge. He loves my powerfulness and independence and appreciates them. But he also is not afraid to appreciate my tenderness, my body and my playfulness. He counsels on sexism and interrupts sexism in other men more and more, lately.

--I had a job about three years ago in which my employer was very pleased with my work. He said that I was the best supervisor they had ever had. At the same time he encouraged me to quit working full-time and to go back to school full-time and work half-time. He worked out my schedule (which happened to be different every other week) so that I could do that. Also, I have a friend who is not in counseling and who listens to me very well. We have a nice relationship and he told me that he has learned a lot from me.

--I have a man friend who's been helpful in sharing his information about manual skills that are traditionally done by a man. He taught me how to use the chainsaw and how to cut down trees -- which was originally a very frightening experience. I've been teaching that to other women.

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--I've occasionally had an experience of being able to say something to a man about something that's bothering me and he's been able to both listen to the information and invite more of the feelings without any apparent feelings of defensiveness.

--A man friend of mine took a part-time job rather than a full-time job in order to equally share child care responsibilities for two children with his wife.

--My husband shares equal responsibility in raising our son in terms of time and in thinking about things. I also have a close friend who co-counsels with me and who is fantastic at encouraging me to work on feelings of dependency on men. He listens to me and is very reassuring, doesn't do what so many have done in terms of getting scared that they're going to be trapped and backing off. He continues to love me.

--Recently I was walking down the street and a group of teenage boys were standing on the corner. I usually walk down the street and smile at people and have a good time. They started making some comments and I turned to them because I didn't hear them. I asked "What?" and one started to repeat it and another grabbed him by the arm and said, "Cut it out now." I smiled at him and kept walking and couldn't figure it out at first. When I came back it didn't happen at all.

--In doing young people's programs in my community, I have seen men work with young people in a loving and thoughtful way.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

It is also necessary to think about where change and improvement and needed and to give this information to men. This means thinking about what we need as women from our allies and how this can best be given and then determining the most effective way to communicate this. Many of us still experience blatant sexism and some of us are more often exposed to the subtler forms of sexism. Some women deny they encounter sexism at all. I suggest that they do not have a very complete or accurate definition of sexism! What suggestions do you have for men?

GROUP RESPONSE

--Men can interrupt each other's sexism. That is powerful support especially if there are ONLY men around.

--I would like to see men start discharging consistently on the patterns of "being perfect" and "knowing all the answers", "being the most experienced", wanting "everything done my way". . . discharging these feelings that the pressure of society has put on them.

--In addition to men listening to women's ideas, I want them to use them.

--Often men joke around "not meaning to hurt anyone". But it does when women are on the short end and men need to realize this. When a woman protests and then another woman says "Well, I don't mind!", the men can take their cue from the woman who is upset and respect her judgment, not pit her against another woman.

--It is a powerful experience for me if a man will respect the fact that I as a woman am pushing right at the edges of my fear all the time. It may look like I am a scared person a lot of the time and if I sense a man is kind of laughing at my fear, I get incredibly angry. It is great when I come across a man who will respect me for my efforts and at the same time be encouraging and supportive of my trying new things.

--I think men can support women by listening to and being interested in women's ideas. My experience is that a lot of men are pleased with and concerned with their own thinking and that of other men. Frequently, conversations are the man talking and the woman listening; or the woman talking and the man thinking his own thoughts and just being polite in listening. Another sexist situation is when a man won't bother to share his thinking with women or is not willing to consider her opinions.

--I think men must be willing to open up their concept of discussion with women and not have a set idea about how discussions should proceed.

--A lot of women stay in a "weak and helpless" stance. It doesn't help when men encourage that and just act "nice and gentle and protective".

--Men need to take women seriously in every single area and if it is threatening, then discharge on that and not let their fears stop them from taking women seriously. Likewise, men can help women by supporting them to take themselves seriously.

--I would like to encourage the men in RC to get other men into RC so that there are more men here for their support and ours.

--I'd like men to remember the internalized oppression that goes on between women and within individual women and to stop colluding with that. Men should not manipulate women into colluding with their sexism for fear of "losing" them.

--To fully support women, men need to fully support other men and help them discharge their frozen needs for "mothering" which have been reinforced by the society. A good next step would be for men who are aware of what needs to change, starting with sexism, to start educating their brothers -- whether it be in their family or on the job or a next-door neighbor.

--It is important for men and women to be committed to changing sexist language. The language which we use carries tremendous impact on us and we will not be free of oppression until our language is totally free of any kind of separation and oppressiveness.

--If you work in an organization that has practically no women in it on a leadership level, take the time to ask why. Get to know the women who are there. Ask them what it's like for them in that organization. If you are in a position of exerting power, confront other policy makers on the issue. Ask them what their affirmative action policy is. Ask what they are doing to insure there are more women in powerful positions. Ask them why they don't want to do this, if they don't and listen to them; then support them to change.

--Men should be aware of women physically when they are joking around. Many women have been mistreated physically -- spanked, beaten, harassed, abused. For instance, to sneak up behind and "scare" a woman as a joke can be traumatic.

--I'd like men to remember how much energy it takes for a woman to live one day of her life surrounded by the institutions, media, and attitudes that all communicate to her an inaccurate picture of herself. A man is truly thinking about a woman if he asks her every so often what that is like and then listens well and doesn't apologize out of guilt at the end!

--I would invite men to think about a woman they love and imagine walking around in her shoes for a day . . . or better yet, spend a day with her that way.

--I would like to see men be able to listen to women without getting defensive or needing reassurance.

--I would like to see men make changes in their professional lives in order to be more nurturing as parents and to expect women to make changes in their nurturing roles to be more successful as professionals.

--I'd like men to hold onto a vision of women, how they can be outside of the oppression, to become more aware of the tremendous effect sexism has on women in everything they do, and to respect our courage and see us as we truly are.

--I want to see men in society helping to prevent rape. I'd like to see men provide information to other men about women that will interrupt this rape culture which is perpetuated by pornography, jokes, advertising, myths about men's "uncontrollable sex drive" and about "women who are just asking for it".

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--In sports, I would like men to be aware that most women have not had the past opportunities that they have had. . .even in the simplest street sports. Men don't need to be patronizing; but they should be aware of each individual woman, i.e. not jump up in front of a woman in an informal volleyball game and spike the ball hard.

--I'd like to see men discharge their need to be "appreciated" for being human and expecting a woman to appreciate them every time they do something that is simply the human thing to do. It is particularly sexist for a man to dramatize to a woman how she doesn't "appreciate" how sensitive he is. It's like an Anglo expecting a Third Worlder to appreciate them for not acting racist.

--I'd like men to admire and respect a woman no matter what she does or where she is in life. Often I hear admiration only expressed in the area of credentials or professional jobs, "Important" positions.

--More about sports: I heard a conversation where a man and a woman were discussing running. The man said, "How far do you run?" The woman said, "I won't answer that because whatever I respond with, you'll up me and it'll be a putdown." Be aware of that. We're getting as good. But it's only been in the last couple of years that there have been sports programs for girls and women that were available for large numbers to learn sports. So for men to put women down because we are not up to you is unfair. If you want to run races, for instance, be careful of your male friends who are determined to come in before the first woman. That's the newest thing in racing: "Did you beat the first woman?" Interrupt that, please.

--I would like to encourage men to draw out women's thinking. And when a woman pauses, don't assume that she's finished, but realize she may be taking more time to think about the next thing she has to say. Be patient.

--Realize that if a woman is repetitive, perhaps that pattern developed because no one would pay attention to her ideas and she learned to say them over and over in all kinds of ways trying to get attention.

--I would like to see men take full pride in themselves and discharge the need to prove themselves at the expense of women or needing women to boost their ego.

I am a man
Knowing for the first time --
daisies, cornflowers, gladiolas,
the flowers in the enclosure
I never learned to name while I was growing up:
beauty and order was just not what I was
supposed to do, not my job:
"This is the way classism is held together by sexism,"
you explained to me, carefully giving me a history lesson
as we walked along the road by the river,
then going piggy-back down to swim naked.

If I learn the names of the flowers,
cook French toast, play on the lawn,
this can make the difference in the way
men walk down the sidewalk, how we
hold our bodies while we work:
you are my ally, my real close buddy,
And I am a man.

Michael Brown
Putney, Vermont, USA

WINNING AGAINST SEXISM

Bristol City - my adopted team since moving from London and Charlton Athletic - have had a dozen women, the Rockin' Robins, in shorts and low cut tops go-go-dancing and cheerleading before the start of each home match for about a year.

During the 1979 International Teachers Workshop I got through to making my commitment in the men's section I was leading - "I solemnly promise that from this moment on I will act, look and sound as valuable, innocent and pure as I must logically be, no matter how worthless, dirty or impure I may be feeling." A tiger was released instantly.

On the following day in a session with Trefor Lloyd and Margaret Green, I decided I would work to end the women's performance at Bristol City, on the obvious grounds that it was pure sexism. I developed a plan.

On my return, I wrote a two paragraph letter on my company paper to the Commercial Secretary asking him to stop using the women, and suggesting we meet to discuss it.

He wrote me two pages of typewritten explanation, all sexist and no response to my suggestion that we meet.

I counseled on my disappointment, and re-planned: I would not act to stop it, but would act so as to make it likely they would stop it whenever a renewal decision came up. I rang him up, and insisted, through many protestations of "busyness," that we meet; he agreed to a date but some six weeks later.

On the agreed day I rang up, only to be told by his secretary that the meeting had been for the week before - rubbish! I suggested we re-schedule for the next week. She rang back in fifteen minutes and said I should come down in an hour on that very day. Hooray!

During the meeting, I listened to a long, detailed, over-thought-out but caring explanation of how the women stopped violence in the stands by focusing attention on the pitch. Moreover, he said, he was really only a businessman, and couldn't concern himself with ethics.

Eventually, running almost out of time, I told him how much I appreciated his thinking about crowd control, but that it was not OK to use women as objects for that purpose. I was very accepting of him, but assertive about his incorrectness.

We agreed that I should not contact his Chairman ("If you do that, I won't ever change my mind") but that I would suggest some alternatives.

On January 6th, some six weeks later, it was announced that the commercial secretary was leaving for a new job at West Bromwich, and ". . . it's goodbye to the Rockin' Robins."

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Victory. My final step was to write to the club chairperson thanking him for abandoning the act and to the deputy club secretary wishing him well and asking him not to do the same at West Bromwich Albion.

WHAT I LEARNED:

1. I can do wide world changing - I really can!
2. I originally wrote on my business notepaper to give myself more status. I don't think I'd do that again.
3. I could have used more support. I had a feeling about "doing it by myself" which I think had some competitive distress in it.
4. It hasn't made any difference to our team's disastrous play on the pitch.

Mike Simmons
Bristol, England

(reprinted from the So. England Region Men's Newsletter)

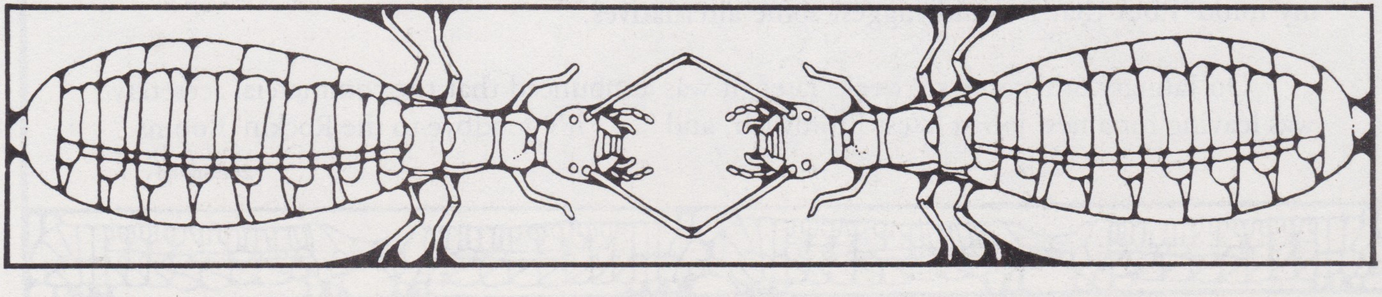
SUCCESSES

At the English Men's Southern Regional Workshop, one exciting part was sharing successes. I have included three here, and more will appear in future issues.

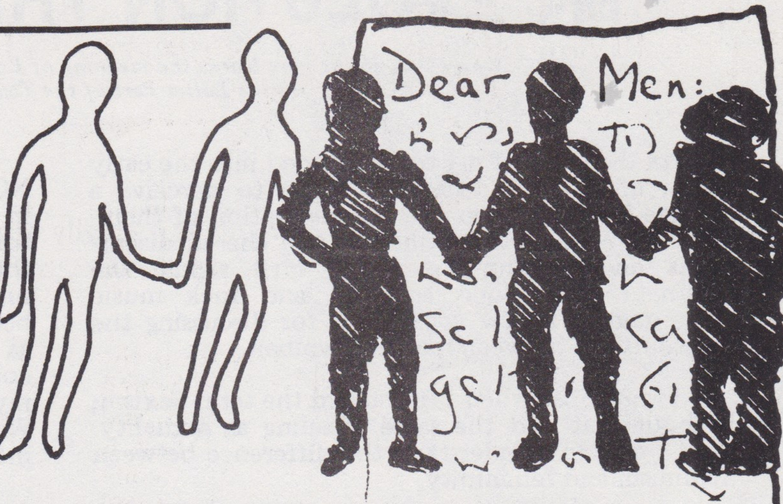
Michael: *Last Christmas Eve, I was on the door of a Gay disco, which I had helped to organise in the basement of a pub. Upstairs there were about seven young men my own age daring each other to come down to the entrance of the disco: they were obviously frightened! I left the door and went upstairs and stood in front of them (in my pink boiler suit) and received a rain of verbal abuse. I stood my ground, and the abuse fizzled out and they started to ask me really personal questions. They listened intently to the answers. I then invited them downstairs and, although they decided not to come, I was very pleased I had turned a potentially violent situation into one where they got information.*

Toby: *I was at a party when suddenly a man arguing with a woman dragged her out through the door and started to beat her up at the bottom of the driveway. I thought to myself, "Well, this is the one I have to do something about!" The immediate implication was that my face would be mutilated and I would probably be killed. I was there with two other men, and thought if they went out, I would really support them. I then thought, "Oh, sod this," and got up and walked out of the house: Barry and Graham immediately followed me. When I reached the drive, the man stopped beating the woman immediately. I didn't get hurt at all, but I did go against my fear.*

Geoff: *I regularly go to watch football at Derby, and sometimes the football is so bad that the spectators fight each other! About six weeks ago, I was standing on the terraces when a big bloke next to me started having an argument with someone behind him, and the two men and their friends began to fight one another. Other people started to try and stop the fight, and I went up to the biggest bloke and put my arm around him. Gradually, he heaved back down and turned around to watch the game. About five minutes later, he turned back to the bloke who he'd been arguing with and shook hands with him.*



ACTING AS AN ALLY THOUGH SCARED



We are a small community in Durban, but strongly committed -- the three active co-counselors are flying to Cape Town for two weekend workshops there, next week.

. . . Recently I acted as a real ally to women. A married couple I know has been in a lot of marital conflict, and I have given a great deal of time to listening to both people, a process which they were grateful for, but which seemed to resolve nothing. The husband began to act in an abusive way to his wife, and I began to feel more and more distressed about the hopelessness of the situation. One evening I heard that she was planning to tell him that she was leaving temporarily. I called at their home and found them in a vicious argument, directed mainly by the husband against the wife. He had already stopped her when she first spoke to him. I interrupted as best as I could the more destructive attacks, and tried to insist that each be treated with respect. I had to leave to attend a meeting, then returned to find the argument continuing. I listened for a time with growing anger that the husband felt free to treat his wife in this way. When she attempted to leave the room he grabbed her with both hands. I was so angry I jumped up and punched him as hard as I could in the head. He jumped back, and shouted at me that I should leave his house. At first I refused, then, very confused and feeling that I had behaved foolishly, I went home.

Fortunately my brother was able to counsel me, and I had a powerful discharge of anger, which is unusual for me -- laughing, shaking, sweating and speaking forcefully. I became clear that my priority was to ensure that my friend was safe, and that I would act to ensure that.

In the morning I heard from a friend that the arguing had continued. I was very scared of being physically attacked, but I went to the house. As it happened, the husband had now left. The wife was in a state of physical and emotional collapse. I phoned a friend, who came and told her that she could not stay there and she must rest. Although she was fainting from exhaustion we managed to take her out and get her to a hospital to recuperate. She then stayed with friends for a few weeks, until her husband became more reasonable and she felt prepared to return. The husband forgave me surprisingly quickly, which rather embarrassed me.

Although the situation was not resolved in a completely positive way, I learnt some good things by doing what I did:

1. I was right to interrupt the violence, and to try to find a way to do that as effectively as I could.

2. I felt a lot stronger about being an ally to women and to other oppressed groups.

3. Women are being oppressed in very "nice" middle-class families, and no one needs to be very nice in interrupting the oppression.

Crispin Hemson
Durban, South Africa

MY EVOLUTION THROUGH SEXISM

Whereby a young man learns the meaning of Love, Men, Women, and Social Order in the Latter Part of the Twentieth Century

As the years of my teens blended into the early years of a third decade, I began to perceive a change in my women friends' perception of themselves. Women with whom I had shared discussions and actions concerning civil rights, the Vietnam War, dope smoking and rock music were gaining a new vocabulary for discussing the relationships between men and women.

I remember when I first heard the term Sexism; I thought it had the same meaning as sexuality. And I couldn't understand the difference between feminism and femininity.

My previous exposure to the Women's Liberation Movement was in Atlantic City when several women burned their bras outside of the Miss America pageant sometime during the sixties. I was bewildered by the newspaper's response, a combination of adultism and joking, not taking it seriously or attempting to understand the symbolism.

I had also watched a Merv Griffen show in 1966 where Betty Friedan and several women appeared on the show to be interviewed. The younger, more militant women left the show when they perceived a set-up for discussing a new book about how men relate to men. Ms. Friedan stayed and explained the Women's Movement and the militant stage that goes along with any liberation struggle.

Sexism and its effect upon our society was very clear to me, once the terms were identified and the situation explained. I didn't see how it related to me, though; I had always been able to maintain friendships with women and support them.

Part of the Free School Movement, in which I was involved, assumed that men and women should be treated equally and afforded the same opportunities, not only to show and develop skills, but to show affection, and to show anger, and to be proud and respected.

In 1973 I set up a household with several friends, one of whom had spent the previous two years acquainting herself with literature, public figures and issues of the Feminist Movement. We spent many winter nights before the fire discussing these things and very slowly my own behaviors, and their sexist elements, began to surface. I was at this same time beginning my first R.C. class so had at my disposal at least the fundamental tools for dealing with what I uncovered.

I began in that period to interrupt sexist jokes and comments among friends and at work, and to view myself as a staunch supporter of that Movement. This was the time when new words were being introduced in common usage, such as chairperson, and people (instead of men), and I enjoyed this a lot. It made so much sense.

My housemate joined the local chapter of NOW and began working on the task force involved in setting up a Rape Crisis Center. I talked with her about this and was aware of intense feelings that came up within me about the topic. I recognized the uneasiness I felt when reading the books because I could identify notions I had accepted as common and realized how these notions were connected with the philosophy of rape. It was my first acute guilt attack associated with the Women's Movement and it nearly immobilized me.

While visiting my parents in Philadelphia I made contact with a group known as Men Organized Against Rape. I met with them and went through training sessions with them and found my counseling skills and the basic R.C. theory of human behavior and potential were invaluable.

When I came back to Raleigh I offered my services to the Rape Crisis Center and was greeted with open arms. I was initially targeted to deal only with male relatives or friends of rape victims and counsel them in overcoming their own irrational reactions. Circumstances created a situation where I was also counseling rape victims, and much to everyone's surprise, this worked well.

By now, however, I was being swamped with guilt and had no clue as to what was going on. This affected all of my relationships with women, especially my sexual relationships. I became coy and uncertain of my sexuality; I made no assumptions regarding love-making. I also became very disenchanted with contemporary manhood.

The important male friends in my life had all seemed to move into relationships from which they could find no time away for me. I was upset by their attitudes and their goals. I felt abandoned by my men friends, so I wrote off all of them.

During the next two years I worked the hardest on a primary relationship, on coming out and being proud of being a Jew, and on being proud of being a man. For both of these I received tremendous support and challenge from several strong women.

The next important step came during dinner with a friend. She is a woman with whom I am very close. She has great pride and respect for herself as a woman, and for me as a man. She is also able to cut through patterns with a devastating accuracy. In the midst of a discussion she became aware of how I was attempting to manipulate the conversation, and how it reminded her of my father. I was silenced. Luckily I was on my way to an ongoing class, during which the dinner scene rolled over and over in my mind. At the end of the class I released a deep flood of tears and gained an understanding. I began to see through the guilt and see where this particular type of intellectual oppression had come from;

how my father had used it against me and had taught me to use it against my mother and sister, a real classic oppressive situation. For the first time I could see through the guilt to see that It Was Not My Fault!

Using this thread I was able to unravel a good deal of distress around sexuality, evaluate my victimization and reach a state of true indignation. My next challenge was homophobia.

I have long been aware of the mutual love I have shared with men friends, and long been aware of the social rules that dictated its expression. In only one situation was expression of my love for a man a full possibility, and we were both so terrified of it that he moved out of the house.

I have effectively counseled on the grief coming from this separation and from years of separation from other male friends. I have also had to counsel on the distress laid in by the armed forces, in particular.

My work on sexuality, coming to terms with what is a rational use of sex for me and what is restimulation, has proven to be essential in dealing with homophobia. The same irrational sexual cues existed for men as for women. To give in to restimulation for the sake of brotherhood seemed preposterous when the love and true brotherhood I was seeking was the same freedom to express alliance, love and caring without being pulled by distress that I had been seeking in true sisterhood with women. This gut level knowledge has allowed me to fearlessly reach out to men and enjoy the contact we've made.

Homophobia was only part of getting close to men. Size and age differences, as well as economic background, also had to be dealt with, for each held its little cue, its little timebomb of distrust which had to be defused.

I had become increasingly aware in counseling during the past year that something was still holding me back from going into the tough of it with women clients. At the spring leadership workshop I tried to find the key, with the help of some trusted counselors, to unlock this last piece. On the way back, on the drive from Winston to Raleigh, a co-counselor suggested a line to me. Using the name of a woman I really wanted to make contact with I said, "__________ , I'm your sister." Well, that sliced through everything, and what followed was the deep discharge of pure relief.

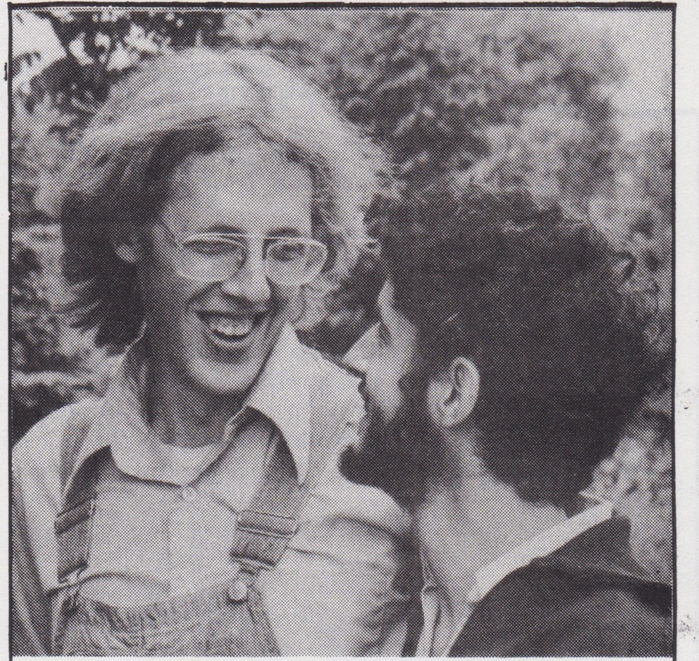
I stuck with that line in sessions, and during a demonstration the image of my very first best friend came to me, a girl named Lydia. We lived next to one another and loved one another from birth to grade school. We shared everything. Even before kindergarten we began to be separated for reasons explained as "She's a girl and you're a boy." I didn't understand it at all. No one explained it to me, and I was angry. I was not allowed to question my parents or express anger, so a sense of guilt began to grow, guilt for wanting to love. After this session I was able to deal with the anger and claim her, Lydia, again as my sister.

Part of this love was sexuality. Even though we were no more than five, we shared a respectful, enjoyable sexuality, until adults and guilt intervened along with ideas of being dirty and nasty. A romantic ideal, presented by the society, also got mixed up with the true childhood love. I have continued to try to re-create that love over and over throughout my life.

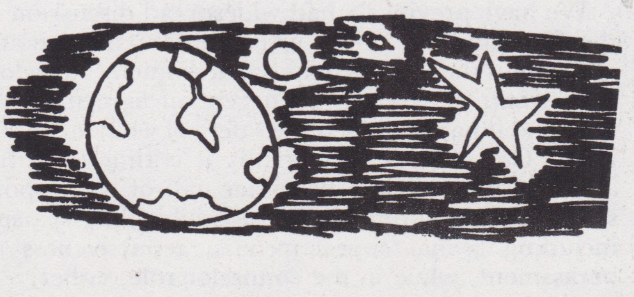
I feel fortunate that this first love was one of equality and respect and caring, qualities which, despite the twisting and turnings of my life since then, have remained basic to all my relationships.

So I have had to travel through adultism, guilt, homophobia, intellectual oppression, physical oppression, Jewish oppression, sexuality and the story of my life to get some sort of clear image of what sexism has done to me.

Jeff London
Raleigh, North Carolina, USA
(reprinted from the South USA Region newsletter)



David Nicklin **Eric Bendix**



July 31, 1981

Dear People,

I ran across a copy of **Men Issue 1** (the only issue?) recently. I found it has some clear statements on sexism that would be helpful in our men's group, both to focus points of departure for our own discussions and to supply, in a supportive sense, an idea of what other men have been expressing. Our group is not an RC one though a few of us have been involved with RC.

I would like a bunch of this issue. Please write as soon as possible and tell me where and how much; also what other publications you have put out.

Yours toward a freer world,
Mike Russo
Clintondale, New York, USA

CLEARING SEXISM FROM THE COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP

In the discussions at the World Conference about repudiating and eliminating the disruptive attacks on leadership which had preceded the Conference, some attention was given to *why* the restimulation had confused as many people as it had, in the face of all the usual assumptions of fairness, respect, etc.

One matter that came to light was the apparently widespread but, until now, little-reported phenomenon of some male RC'ers making sexist sexual overtures *while in the counselor role* to female clients.

We have previously had widespread discussion in the Communities of the principle that men should not exhibit their sexist material at women counselors *while clients.* There has been general agreement on this, and it has increased the safety of women RC'ers in the Community. Apparently it is time to firmly and clearly enunciate the other half of the responsibility. Men RC'ers *should not* exhibit their sexism, including sexual suggestiveness, seductiveness or harassment, while in the counselor role, either.

(A number of men [and women] have contacted me since the discussion to say that dramatization of sexual distress at male clients by female counselors also takes place, and I have no doubt that it occurs and should be stopped. This is not the same or comparable, however, to male counselors harassing a female client, which is part of and becomes reinforced by the heavy sexist oppression of the society as a whole.)

Let's have an immediate end to dramatization of sexual distress in counseling sessions. Let's use our counseling tools to require any misbehaving counselors to be client on this distress and eliminate it.

Please share with others in letters to the journals the good experiences and successes you have had in eliminating this kind of clutter and achieving loving, respectful Co-Counseling attitudes as a result.

—Harvey Jackins

Denmark Men's Topic Group

At the International Workshop, Helsingør, Denmark, January, 1980, we were together with about ninety people. Sunday afternoon three of us joined the topic group on "men against sexism." We were only three of the almost forty men but we thought we would like to do something to break the walls between the men, to bring them together, to give attention to sexism and to let them feel supported to fight it, and it worked!

But first, the report we made that Sunday evening:

We have been together in the topic group "Men Against Sexism." We have used a three-step-technique to look at what we as men can do to free the world from sexism.

First we told each what we were proud of as men. We are proud of being strong, safe. We are proud that we can cry and show our feelings. We are proud that we have the power to help stop the oppression of women. We are proud of our bodies.

What is difficult for us is that the society forces roles upon us: we are expected to have a job, to get married, to build a family, to make numerous decisions for the family; often we may not wear clothes we like. We may not cry and should be brave.

What is difficult, too, is that we have to be strong even in this fight against sexism. Other men looking at us say, "Oh, what a weak person he is," and decide to leave us alone.

Although women often have to target us with their anger at being oppressed by men, saying things like, "You are the oppressor," we struggle to remember we are good, and continue our firm goal of stopping sexism.

Another difficulty of being a man, especially a co-counseling man, is that it's sometimes scary to love one's female counselor and not to rehearse sexist patterns.

After this we each shared the goals that we have set for ourselves in getting rid of sexist patterns. To feel that we and others support each other in getting rid of all sexist patterns and to show the women that we are working on it, we asked all the men to come and join us. Then everybody said to his neighbor in the most loving way, while giving a hug: I am going to help you to get rid of all your sexist patterns.

(Now it is September, and we would like to add one important thing to our report: that it is very important to give women the support in the way they want it. We men must not determine what support they need.)

And so it happened. All the men stood in front of the group, where the women sat. The walls between the men fell down. They reached each other and enthusiastically supported each other in the fight against sexism. They gave their appreciation by applause and yelling. It really was one of the eye-opening experiences of the workshop. Men fighting sexism!

Kurt Rosdahl, Naestved, Denmark
Ben Sibon, Almelo, The Netherlands
Wibo Koole, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Dear Chuck,

Three cheers for *Men* No. 1! This journal is a deep support to me. I cried when I read the theory articles. Clearly stating the importance of men's re-emergence while at the same time stating that the liberation of women and young people will not be quelled in any way, was especially important to me. That thought brings great safety to me because it interrupts my feelings of being oppressed and also hits the grief I have about the hurts men carry.

My class has one man and ten women. Last week Betsy Damon, our teacher, counseled him on what it's like to be male. I realized that it's possible to counsel on being male without being oppressive -- which he wasn't at all. At the end of his time he was shouting, "It's great to be male!" and we were cheering him on. Celebrating his being male really made me discharge! It's not hard to cheer someone; at the same time I had to step out of patterns to do it -- a great balance of attention.

Men's re-emergence and my counseling men on their re-emergence is a delightful way for me to break through the ceiling.

With heartiest support,
Alice Weiner
Brooklyn, New York, USA

LE SOUTIEN REEL ENTRE LES HOMMES

PROPOSITIONS POUR UN SOUTIEN REEL ENTRE HOMMES DANS LA SUISSE ROMANDE ET SES REGIONS VOISINES

Programme en un seul point du Coconseil: “rechercher par la pratique du coconseil à recouvrer son intelligence perdue et aider les autres à faire de même.”

—retrouver ses capacités d’exprimer ses sentiments négatifs, positifs et douloureux en diverses occasions (séances, groupes cc, quotidien. . .) est d’une importance vitale pour briser notre conditionnement de “ne-pas-se-laisser-aller-à-ses-émotions.”

—retrouver ses capacités de s’entr’aider, se soutenir, s’aimer, sans limites (par des contacts physiques, chaleureux, tendres, par l’écoute et le respect mutuels), est aussi crucial pour nous défaire du conditionnement de compétition et de méfiance qu’éprouvent les hommes entre eux, et d’une manière générale la plupart des êtres humains.

Les groupes de soutien de Coconseil pour hommes est un moyen extrêmment efficace pour réaliser ces deux objectifs.

Des antécédents à ces groupes:

La collaboration entre hommes existe dans la vie courante, aussi à des fins constructives et intelligentes (humanitaires, syndicales, professionelles. . .).
De nombreuses femmes, dans et hors du CC, ont déjà fait et font encore l’expérience de tels groupes.

I. Besoins actuels et spécifiques des hommes pour ces groupes de soutien:

Disposer d’un lieu sûr pour—

—d’écharger nos émotions, “poser nos masques,” ce qui contredit complètement les traditionnelles réunions masculines;

—se rapprocher, s’entr’aider, se laisser aimer les autres et être aimé par eux;

—aborder des sujets plus facilement, sans les gênes et les peurs que provoquerait la présence de femmes et de jeunes personnes (comme la sexualité, la violence, le sexisme. . .);

—prendre du plaisir à être, jouer, créer ensemble;

—vivre des relations affectueuses. tendres et faciles entre nous;

—partager nos histoires et victoires personnelles;

—acquérir la force et la confiance en soi de prolonger de telles relations dans son quotidien;

—se rendre compte et partager le fait que d’autres hommes mènent des mêmes combats pour leur réémergence.

II. Réalisation de ces besoins dans les groupes de soutien:

—Contenu fondamental des réunions de Coconseil:

“Que dans toute réunion de CC (qu’il s’agisse de groupes de soutien, de comité, de cours, de commissions, de classes, d’ateliers ou d’autre chose) on s’efforce d’inclure les points suivants:

a. revue de la théorie existante;

b. information sur les développements récents de la théorie;

c. progrès accomplis dans la réémergence individuelle.”

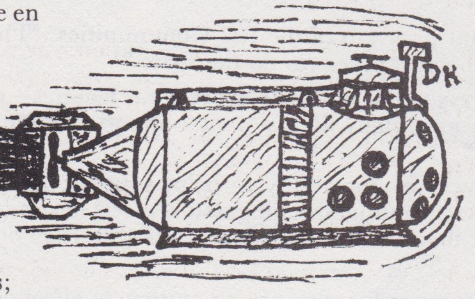
—Contenu de base des groupes de soutien hommes:

Théorique:	Pratique:
—Tout homme a le droit d’être fier de lui-même. Les hommes sont fondamentalement bons, intelligents, attentifs, aimants et coopérants. Les hommes ont le droit d’apprécier les qualités “dites d’hommes,” comme l’initiative, l’indépendance, et le courage.	—Complète appréciation de soi-même. Validations mutuelles, cercle d’or, maintien de direction positive.
—Les hommes ont besoin de reconquérir les qualités perdues ou rejetées par l’éducation, telles les capacités de décharger, de soutenir, d’être chaleureux, patients, doux, coopérants.	—Travail sur l’homophobie, sur l’invalidation intériorisée, échange de tendresse, d’affection, partage du positif, du jeu, de la créativité.
—Les hommes ne sont pas oppressifs de nature. Aucun homme n’opprimerait s’il n’avait été opprimé lui-même. Comme garçon, il a subi des blessures particulières (ridiculisé si tendre, ému; violence. . .) et est encouragé plus tard à prendre le rôle d’oppresseur contre les femmes, les enfants et certaines catégories d’hommes (comme les pauvres, les arabes, les travailleurs, les homosexuels, les juifs. . .).	—Travail sur l’oppression (technique en trois points), sur des engagements, directions soutenues d’action dans sa vie.

—Les hommes peuvent apprécier totalement le courage et la force en eux et être un soutien sûr pour la réémergence de chaque personne. Le principal obstacle à ce soutien est la peur et la timidité inculquées en eux (et en les femmes), alors qu'ils (elles) étaient enfants. Retrouver sa pleine confiance en soi est essentiel aussi pour chaque homme.

—Travail sur la puissance.

—Partage de ses réussites.



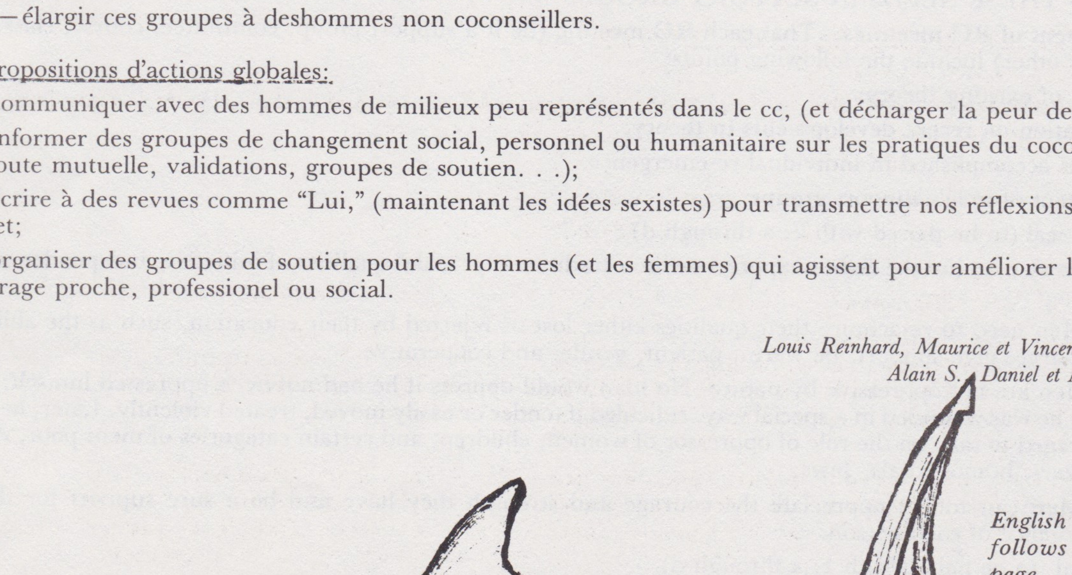
III. Suggestions d'hommes de la région:

- en dehors des groupes de soutien:
  - faire des séances régulières entre hommes;
  - se téléphoner;
  - s'engager à être disponible;
  - faire des groupes de soutien d'urgence, informels;
  - formation d'un noyau;
  - organiser le soutien entre les hommes de Neuchâtel, Lausanne et Genève;
  - informer les autres communautés;
  - faire des articles pour "Réémergence" et "Men" (revue anglophone de cc pour les hommes).
- pour les groupes ou ateliers hommes:
  - se réunir une soirée ou une journée par trimestre ou quatre dimanches par un;
  - organiser un atelier ou une journée spécifique sur la validation;
  - faire une soirée-rencontre de tous les hommes de la Romandie;
  - utiliser la technique de la "relationnelle" pour améliorer les rapports entre deux conseillers;
  - trouver une technique (qui se nomerait technique de Caïn et Abel. . .) pour combattre l'automatisme de compétition;
  - se soutenir entre pères;
  - partager les expériences de la vie courante;
  - écouter et s'informer des pensées et des témoignages de ceux et celles qui vivent des situations d'opprimées (enfants, femmes, homosexuels, personnes du Tiers-Monde, travailleurs manuels. . .);
  - que les groupes soient accueillants et sécurisants pour les homosexuels;
  - travailler sur la relation de couple;
  - travailler sur comment parler du cc aux hommes non coconseillers;
  - élargir ces groupes à deshommes non coconseillers.

IV. Propositions d'actions globales:

- communiquer avec des hommes de milieux peu représentés dans le cc, (et décharger la peur de le faire);
- informer des groupes de changement social, personnel ou humanitaire sur les pratiques du coconseil (écoute mutuelle, validations, groupes de soutien. . .);
- écrire à des revues comme "Lui," (maintenant les idées sexistes) pour transmettre nos réflexions sur le sujet;
- organiser des groupes de soutien pour les hommes (et les femmes) qui agissent pour améliorer leur entourage proche, professionel ou social.

Louis Reinhard, Maurice et Vincent de Lausanne,
Alain S. Daniel et Marc de Genève
La Suisse
26 Avril 1980



English translation follows on the next page . . .

FULL SUPPORT FOR MEN

PROPOSITIONS FOR PROGRAM OF FULL SUPPORT FOR MEN IN FRENCH-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND AND SURROUNDING TERRITORY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The one-point program of the RC Communities: "Through RC to seek recovery of one's occluded intelligence and to assist others to do the same."

1. The recovery of our ability to express our feelings—negative, positive, painful—in different situations (sessions, RC groups, daily life) is of vital importance for countering our conditioning of "never-let-yourself-go-emotionally."

2. The recovery of our ability to help, support, and love each other without limits (by warm and tender physical contact, mutual listening and respect) is also crucial for getting over our conditioning to competition and mistrust that we men specifically feel with each other and that the majority of human beings in general also feel.

B. RC support groups for men are an extremely effective means to realize these two goals.

C. The antecedents of these support groups:

1. Collaboration among men exists already in daily life, also for constructive and intelligent goals: humanitarian activities, labor unions, professional societies.

2. Numerous women, in and out of RC, have already experienced, and continue to experience, such support groups.

II. PRESENT AND SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MEN FOR SUCH SUPPORT GROUPS

A. Have a safe place to:

1. Discharge our emotions, "take off our masks," which completely contradicts traditional meetings of males;
2. Get close, help each other, let ourselves love and be loved;
3. Handle more easily certain subjects, without the fear and embarrassment which might be provoked by the presence of women or young persons (sexuality, violence, sexism);
4. Find pleasure from being, playing, and creating with each other;
5. Live out affectionate, tender, easy relations with each other;
6. Share our personal victories and experiences;
7. Acquire the strength and self-confidence to extend this type of relationship into our daily life;
8. Realize and share the fact that other men are engaged in the same struggle for their re-emergence.

III. MEETING THESE NEEDS IN SUPPORT GROUPS

A. Basic content of RC meetings: That each RC meeting (be it a support group, committee, course, class, workshop, or other) include the following points:

1. Review of existing theory;
2. Information on recent developments in theory;
3. Progress accomplished in individual re-emergence.

B. Basic content of men's support groups

1. Theoretical (to be paired with 2, a through d)

   a. Every man has the right to appreciate their traditionally "male" qualities of initiative, independence, and courage.

   b. Men need to re-acquire their qualities either lost or rejected by their education, such as the ability to discharge, give support, be warm, patient, gentle, and cooperative.

   c. Men are not oppressive by nature. No man would oppress if he had not been oppressed himself. As a boy, he was wounded in a special way: ridiculed if tender or easily moved, treated violently. Later, he is encouraged to take on the role of oppressor of women, children, and certain categories of men: poor, Arabs, workers, homosexuals, Jews. . .

   d. Men can totally appreciate the courage and strength they have and be a sure support for the re-emergence of each person.

2. Practical (to be paired with 1, a through d)

   a. Complete self-appreciation, mutual validation, golden circle, holding of positive directions

   b. Work on homophobia and on internalized invalidation; exchange tenderness and affection; share positive things, play, and creativity

   c. Work on oppression with three-step technique, make commitments, find action directions in the wide world

   d. Work on power and share successes

IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE MEN OF FRENCH-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

A. Outside of support groups

1. Have sessions regularly with other men.
2. Telephone each other.
3. Commit ourselves to be available.
4. Form informal support groups when urgent.
5. Form a nucleus, a core group.
6. Organize support among men of Neuchâtel, Lausanne, and Geneva.
7. Inform other communities.
8. Write articles for Re-emergence and Men.

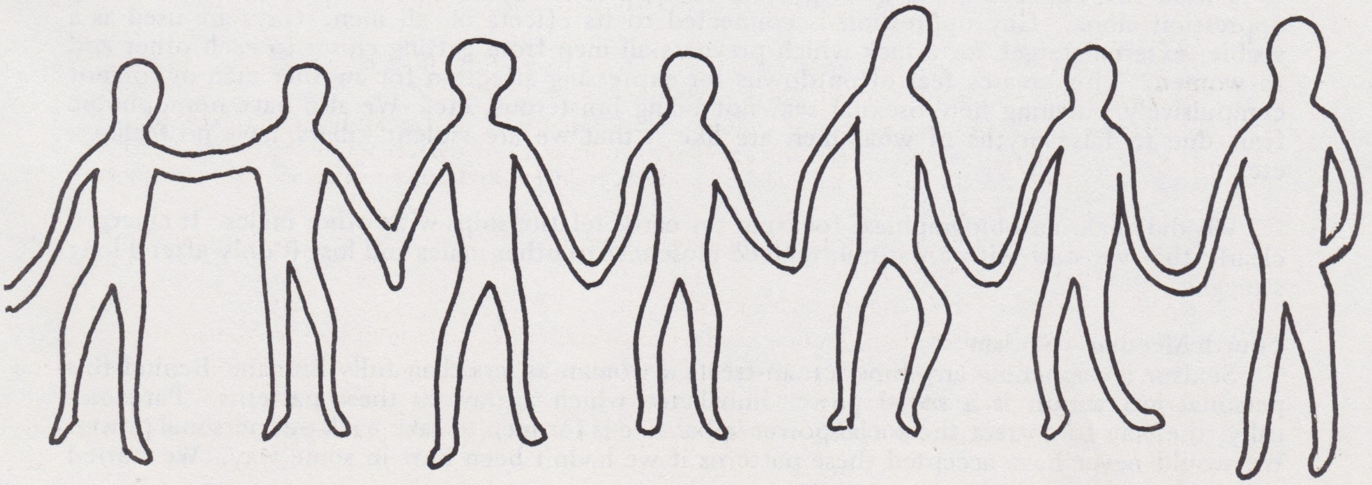
B. In the framework of support groups and men's workshops

1. Meet one day or evening every three months or four Sundays per year.
2. Organize a workshop or a day to be spent exclusively on validation.
3. Have an evening where all the RC men of French-speaking Switzerland can meet each other.
4. Use relationship counseling to improve relations between two RCers.
5. Find a technique (which could be called "Cain and Abel") to combat the competition pattern.
6. Support each other as fathers.
7. Share experiences of daily life.
8. Listen to and inform ourselves about the thoughts and experiences of those who are living in oppressive situations: children, women, homosexuals, Third-World people, manual workers, etc.
9. Make the support groups welcoming and safe for homosexuals.
10. Work on the couple relationship.
11. Work on how to present RC to men outside of RC.
12. Open groups to men outside of RC.

C. IN THE WIDE WORLD

1. Communicate with men from groups which are at present under-represented in RC (and discharge the fear which keeps us from doing this).
2. Share information about certain RC techniques (mutual listening, validation, support groups) with members of groups which are working for social, personal, or humanitarian change.
3. Write to magazines like Lui (French equivalent of Playboy, which maintains sexist ideas) to transmit our reflections on the subject.
4. Organize support groups for men (and women) who are already actively engaged in improving their personal, professional, or social situation.

Louise Reinhard, Maurice and Vincent of Lausanne,
Alain S., Daniel and Marc of Geneva
Men's Workshop led by Marc Houvet and Vincent Bregani
April 26, 1980
Switzerland



REPORTS: SUPPORT GROUPS, WORKSHOPS, COMMUNITIES

Leading a Regional Men's Support Group (the first six months)

First Meeting -- Men Supporting Men

We introduced everyone, worked on the restimulation of being in a group of men, talked about goals for the support group, discussed ideas on how to meet those goals, and did self-appreciations as men.

I clarified that we have all of our fine qualities simply because we are human beings. In appreciating ourselves as men we are not saying that women do not have these qualities. Each group is only allowed to develop certain aspects of humanness and is required to suppress others. In appreciating ourselves as men, we are appreciating those qualities that have been allowed or encouraged because we are men, and take special delight in them.

I stressed that we were not there to develop a theoretical model of what sexism is, but to support each other as individuals. Coming from different racial, ethnic and class backgrounds, each of us would carry male patterns common to our unique background. One particular model of sexist patterns would reinforce oppressive stereotypes (for example, often working class forms of sexism are criticized while middle class forms go by unnoticed), and get in the way of thinking about each of us as individuals.

I emphasized learning to support each other because where we were giving up on getting support from other men was where we were giving up on ourselves as men, and because the pattern of men always turning to women for support was oppressive to women. I encouraged men to make committed counseling relationships with other men, and to bring their male counselors to the group for mutual support.

Second Meeting -- The Discharge Process

Because discharge is the key to moving forward, and because men carry discharge-inhibiting patterns, we addressed that right at the outset. I talked about how discharge is inhibited in young males, often under threat of violence from older males (an example was someone's father saying, "If you don't stop crying, I'll really give you something to cry about"). I asked a man who had trouble discharging tears to begin by making the sounds of crying, no matter how phony it sounded in the beginning. As counselor, I was encouraging and appreciative of all his attempts. One of his regular counselors said he had never seen this man discharge as heavily as he did by the end of the demonstration.

Third Meeting -- Homophobia

I used this concept in its most general sense, as fear of men, rather than in terms of Gay oppression alone. Gay oppression is connected to its effects on all men. Gays are used as a visible, external target for attack which prevents all men from getting closer to each other and to women. This creates fear of putdowns for expressing affection for another man or for not compulsively pursuing heterosexual sex, not being boisterous, etc. We also have homophobic fears due to false myths of what men are like -- that we are violent killers, have no feelings, etc.

We did male autobiographies, focusing on early relationships with other males. It emerged clearly that we start with a natural, relaxed closeness to other males and lose it only after a long struggle.

Fourth Meeting -- Sexism

Sexism is happening any time a man treats a woman as less than fully human. Behind this personal interaction is a social power imbalance which aggravates these patterns. Paradoxically, the way to correct the social power imbalance is for men to take back our personal power. We would never have accepted these patterns if we hadn't been hurt in some way. We started with an area of difficulty in supporting women, seeing how this led back to a way in which we had been oppressed, seeing that what was happening was the restimulation of old hurts, and in some cases the playing out of the flip side of a pattern.

Men sometimes have difficulty seeing that men are not oppressed by women because much early hurtful conditioning of young males is done by women in their roles as mothers, teachers, etc. This has to be seen in the context of the oppression of women; these are low prestige, low-paying positions with women just one step above the young people they are working with in the power hierarchy. Women then play a "middleman" role for adult men so that the anger against adultist oppression is later mis-directed towards women in general. To avoid being restimulated by women and to be effective allies, men need to clean up these early memories. The first step in the three-step technique (how we have been oppressed) is not for simply getting in touch with what it feels like to be oppressed. If this was the basis for overcoming oppression, we would still be acting on feelings, in this case "sympathetic" ones, and we would feel a pull to rush in and perform a "rescue" operation. The point of the first step is to discharge our own internalized oppression, because that's what's keeping us from really being allies and ending all oppression.

Fifth Meeting - Sharing Counseling Time

The group had grown close enough and enough basic themes had been aired that we consolidated where we were instead of introducing new material. Every man counseled on where he needed to move next in these areas.

Sixth Meeting -- Rational Manhood

I gave a talk on our goal of full re-emergence so we would not get lost in focusing all our attention on the patterns. It is important not to confuse the reverse of a pattern with being rational in that area. For example, men may be validated for being "sensitive" when what is actually going on are patterns of timidity or passivity. We want to fully reclaim being men, including the power and assertiveness which goes with that. I speculated that lack of a clear policy in this area was holding us back in RC; that one reason we were not extending rapidly into working class and Third World communities was that we were looking for the flip side of traditional male patterns, mistaking that for re-emergence from male distress, thereby screening out men who carried traditional masculine patterns. I challenged men to re-think their relationships with co-workers and other men, and not prefer one set of patterns to another, especially when thinking about recruitment.

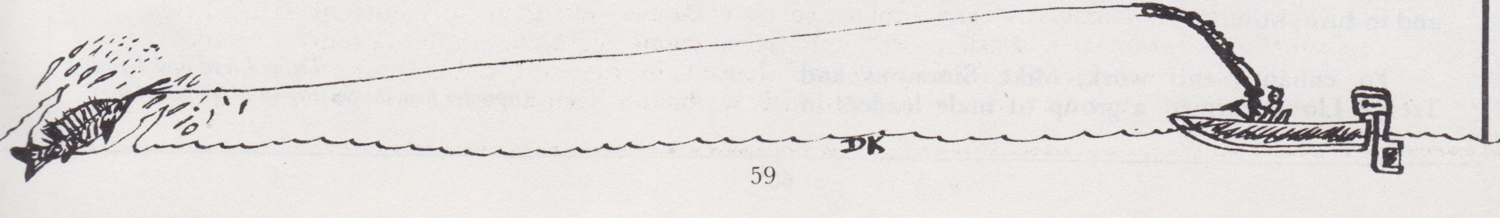
Working in this area brought up lots of feelings of powerlessness and having been intimidated by other men, including fears of male violence.

One man said he thought there was some dramatization rather than discharge going on in the support group, and that this was connected to fear of discharging in front of other men. After he discharged on not feeling safe with men, he counseled me in front of the group the way he thought it should be done. I gave him time afterwards on what it had been like to counsel the leader. This pushed the group forward, and we will be spending time in future meetings working on men counseling men.

A solid core of men committed to each other and the group is emerging. I think the effectiveness of the men's support group will spill over into the community by helping people to think more clearly about what it means to be an ally on other oppression issues as well.

Possible themes for future meetings include adultism, Gay oppression, leadership, sexuality, violence, as well as more work on topics we've already touched on.

Harry Brod
San Diego, California, USA

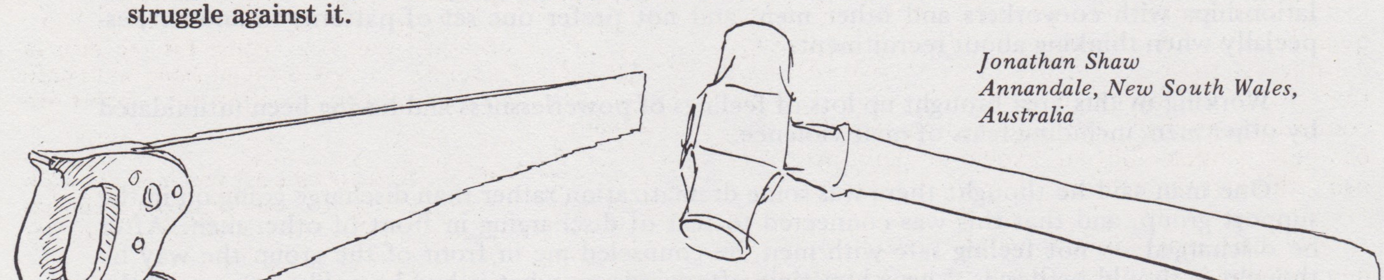


. . . Our men's group has been meeting now for close to two years. Originally we met once a fortnight -- this year (1979), once a month. For most of the last year we've had a consistent attendance of *three* men, with one or two guests from out of town. Following a letter from Charlie Kreiner at the start of the year, we each decided on an area we would undertake to clean up completely, and each meeting of the group we'd all have time to work, with regular opportunities to report on progress. The main other consistent thread in the last year has been a detailed discussion of Harvey's draft policy for men's re-emergence. This has been very useful in bringing to light areas where different ones of us -- or all -- needed more information; in providing a clearly defined position and so clarifying areas of disagreement; and in suggesting useful lines of action. When the first issue of *Men* arrived, it was great to see that many of the same concerns are shared by men elsewhere in R.C. The general direction of our group, from the very beginning, has been towards taking pride in being men: we spent a lot of time, especially at the beginning, sharing pleasant memories. We've attempted to get at the internalised invalidation of us as men -- it was after the arrival of *Men* that we were able to get our teeth into it properly. The same things were being said, but the tone stayed high and things were clearly moving. As each of us said the things he couldn't stand about being a man and about other men, I became very excited about the notion that all those awful things were part of the distress, not of our inherent nature at all.

The group is important to me in this way: when I was young I got a lot of invalidation for not being "manly," and have never felt that I really was a man. For about seven years, I was a member of an all-male Catholic religious order, where vows of celibacy tied in with this distress. Mind you, it's not all distress: in many ways, I escaped or sidestepped or was spared the imposition of hurtful masculine patterns. I never felt I could possibly fill the stereotype, and although I have a lot of shame about this, I have been free of its coercive force.

Since leaving the order, I've lived with, developed friendships with, and largely worked with women (and now children!). Leading this group has been an opportunity on the one hand to discharge a lot of the shame about my "unmanliness," and on the other, to move towards reclaiming my manhood -- taking pride in the kind of man I am, which is certainly as valid as the kinds encouraged in the society at large. Listening to the other men in the group, I've found (of course!) that I'm not as different after all. The stereotype probably never fits completely -- it may mesh neatly with chronic patterns, but it's reassuring to discover how ready men are to struggle against it.

Jonathan Shaw
Annandale, New South Wales,
Australia



REGIONAL REPORT

Since the last Regional Men's Workshop in January, we have changed our way of working to adapt to the growing strength of men in the Region. We realized that doing workshops and gatherings around the Region needed to come second to doing what we were encouraging others to do: start support groups, work on our sexism, homophobia and Gay oppression. Since that time, we have been building our own Areas, finding out effective ways of working on our own distress, and in turn, others'.

To enhance this work, Mike Simmons and Trefor Lloyd formed a group of male leaders in the Region primarily to learn to counsel each other better: this "Golden Circle," after three meetings, has become a place where we can personalise the "three-step technique" and learn how to tackle "hard" areas.

We plan to visit Areas in the new year to see how we can assist men still further. Also, there will be a Regional Men's Workshop in Chislehurst, Kent . . .

Trefor Lloyd and Lynn
(reprinted from the So. Region Men's Newsletter)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MEN'S WORKSHOP

Chuck Esser led an outstanding one-day men's workshop on June 14, 1980 at the West Los Angeles Area R.C. Center. The workshop was attended by approximately thirty men. Important information was presented about where men's work is in R.C. at this time. Some of the key ideas follow.

Men's support groups are now becoming solidly established within numerous communities, and men are seeing that support groups are important to their re-emergence.

Women are communicating more to men about what they need; men are getting beyond guilt, seeing that they have been deeply hurt by the oppressor role, and discharging so the oppression stops. As a result of this work, several workshops have been held where men and women work together to discharge on sexism.

It is important for men to effectively co-counsel each other. To do this, men need to counsel on how they feel about each other.

Many men have dropped out of Re-Evaluation Counseling because they "don't discharge." Several techniques exist to help men with their discharge. One is to have the man focus on his first memory of when a particular form of discharge (which he would like to have occur more frequently) was cut off and counsel on that memory. Another is to focus on the last memory of when that form of discharge occurred. Finally, the counselor can have the client dramatize the discharge. Chuck did an excellent demonstration using this last technique.

We can make fundamentals classes safer for men by reassuring them that it is fine to just talk -- that no more is expected or needed than to tell their life story and re-tell it. For some men, this is necessary if they are to remain in Re-evaluation Counseling.

Men carry around a great amount of embarrassment and can profitably spend time discharging it. A demonstration was done on this topic and the amount of embarrassment that was discharged amazed everyone. Men are embarrassed about being close to each other, playing with each other, expressing feelings to each other, looking foolish in front of each other, etc. (Editor's note: counselors should beware of a tendency to cut off discharge of embarrassment prematurely in the effort to get to "deeper feelings.")

To help men become more effective counselors, the workshop divided into small groups and each man took time counseling another man in front of the group and then received feedback on what went well and what could have been more effective.

About one hour of the workshop was devoted to playing together. For many men, this was a highlight of the workshop. Each man was encouraged to play hard and challenge each other.

The workshop revealed that men are moving forward. They are playing together, enjoying each other, supporting one another, and discovering the love men have for men.

Gary Watson
(reprinted from the W. Los Angeles, California, USA newsletter)

September 3, 1980

Dear Chuck:

I have often thought about you since the Southern California Men's Workshop in June.

The West Los Angeles Area Men's Support Group is meeting regularly each month and doing excellent work. There is much discharge, support and caring. There is also high commitment to the group and to re-emerging as men. It is exciting for all of us. We currently have ten members and expect to add several more in the next few months.

Your workshop was a big boost for the men in Southern California. It gave a lot of hope and confidence about men's ability to discharge and support one another.

You asked me to write and tell you how my work on men's distress and with the men's support group has changed my life. What follows is an answer to that question.

The first thought that comes to my mind is that an enormous weight has been taken off my shoulders. I don't feel isolated from men and living apart from them. I wouldn't have been able to express that one-and-a-half years ago. If someone had asked me if I missed men's support and companionship, I would have said: "What support and companionship? Men are not close and supportive." Now, I feel a great deal of support from men. I know that there really is a person under the patterns who is tender, kind, loving, and playful.

The second thought is that I am getting a lot of support and love from men. The consequences of this are that I do not feel lonely, I do not rely on women to give me all my nurture, I am able to support women more awarely, and I am able to act more powerfully with women—for example, interrupt their patterns.

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The third thought is that I am much more confident in my interaction with all men. I know that there is a person under the patterns that wants out. Thus, I approach all men with confidence that they are the same as I am and want the same things for themselves that I want. It is much easier for me to be loving, zestful, and relaxed with men. I consciously reach out to men. The results of this are wonderful. I have formed many nice relationships with men, which I would never have developed otherwise. I have reached out especially to two men who have become very close friends.

I have learned to be consistent in reaching out to men. I attempt to always be loving, zestful and supportive—regardless of their state of mind and the patterns that may be running. This has worked out very well, because some men have been so oppressed that their patterns will not allow the person to believe that another man could really be loving, supportive and zestful. After a while, however, the person prevails over the pattern. Such men can be the very best of friends.

These are some of the changes that have occurred in my life. I am taking a trip with a male friend—the first time ever—and we will be together for a month on a vacation in England. Our wives are staying at home since they have other activities planned.

In the coming months, the men's support group will be working on interrupting oppression, on fear of violence, and will continue with our work on sexuality. We are also having a joint session with the women's support group.

Have a good year. We look forward to the next issue of Men.

Sincerely,
Gary Watson
Los Angeles, California, USA

Dear Judy,

. . . I am delighted that you are stirring the coals of a men's support group and that you wrote to ask me about it.

I organized the third men's support group around Chicago. Nicholas DuPont first began one in Evanston three years ago, and later led a men's class. Bill Ganschow started another in the city about a year later. Each lasted six months to a year, and led to "burn out" on the part of the leaders as they found themselves the focus of a lot of one-way thinking about the groups, with the members generally coming to see what the "leader" had planned for them this time. Despite that, a number of men grew, discharged much homophobia, distress around work, and some feelings on the male role in sexism. A few of us learned what needed to be done to make the group of men survive the pull to act dependently.

My group began a year ago last February with six of us attending regularly, occasionally joined by three or four other men.

I tried a lot of things, but those which were most effective included:

1) David Jones' suggestion of a "pig pile" at the start of a meeting, and the closeness and touching and pure play which loosened us up and brought us close to each other in ways that no amount of "heavy thought" could have done;

2) Bob Kuller led a class in which each of us sought out our earliest memory of having closeness and touch rejected by our father; it brought up both grief and terror;

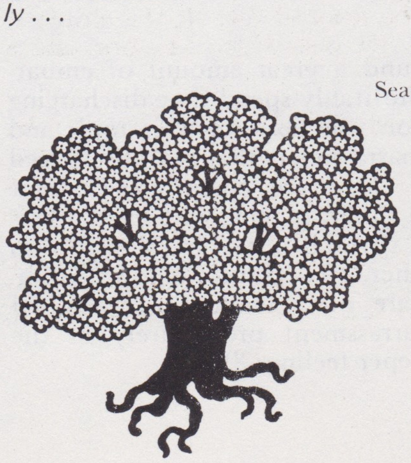
3) I "refused to lead" the group in the traditional sense of planning everything for them, and insisted that if I were to lead in the RC sense, that the other members would commit themselves to think about me, and do the work of planning and notifying, etc., while I was free to think about the group, gather my observations plus my own insights and outside research into an overall program, and take some time as necessary to lecture on theory applied in areas where I thought it would be useful and timely. All the men agreed to that from the first meeting and stuck to it well, and continued to attend despite some of my own feelings that we were always about to fall apart, all because "I wasn't doing enough." My role was the correct one.

You asked about encouraging men to take pride in themselves, and I'm at a loss to explain how we did it; we just did. It helps to remember that we increase our safety and discharge if we find something in our lives that we're proud of. People seem to hear that pretty well. Then as counselors we can more easily relax and open ourselves to hearing about a person's background, and remember to listen with respect, as that person has been a true survivor, even if they have trouble believing it.

The men I worked with knew where they needed to go, and when given enough relaxed space, the lovely human being would burst into tears at having to carry the burden around all these years, and not be seen. Then they would cry, and tell us about the kind of person they would like to reveal to the world all the time. It didn't always happen, as we weren't always relaxed enough to allow it, and be free from our own anxieties and anger at their patterns, but the men found enough safety and an accepting enough group, that they kept returning. We knew we were all in the same boat, and were all committed to the best for each other, free of blame or rejection.

When I left the Area for four months, it was with the agreement that these men would continue to meet monthly . . .

David Jewell
Seattle, Washington, USA



Southern England Men's Workshop

I have just returned from the Southern Region Men's Workshop and want to tell you what happened and what I learned.

The introductions and farewells were highlights for me and indicators of how far we men have moved. We shared something about ourselves which is exciting us right now, giving specific examples, and identifying the people in the workshop to whom we already felt close. This set a tone which was maintained throughout, of men being excited about being together and about getting close. At the end of the workshop we each named one person with whom we had "fallen in love" over the weekend, to resounding cheers.

Lynn proposed that the theme of the workshop be the development of our ability to counsel each other well, and to discharge the things which make that difficult. He encouraged us to set up sections around particular themes we needed to work on and not just around shared oppressions. The sections were as follows: Making friendships with women; teachers; Gays; allies to Gay men; Jewish friends; the big thaw (frozen needs).

Trefor talked about the need to focus less on issues and more on cleaning up the distresses which keep men separate from each other. Some of these are fear of violence, competition, criticism (both critical patterns and feelings we have about being criticised). Others are frozen needs, isolation and loneliness, 'mock' bravery (that is, the difficulty men have about letting each other in on the bits of ourselves which really hurt), and our impatience with each other which makes it hard to consistently offer each other loving attention, closeness, appreciation, etc.

Trefor did three demonstrations, all memorable for his relaxed and loving, yet very persistent counselling. He worked first with a man on his distress about being criticised at work; next with a man on his grief at not having had any model of a man being tender in his childhood. The third demonstration was with two men who wanted to get closer to each other. Trefor invited them to begin to do that, and discharge on the feelings, and it quickly became clear just how strange and unfamiliar an activity this is for men. It seemed as though the men just didn't know where or how to start, and as the demonstration progressed, the level of restimulation in the workshop seemed to creep up and up.

A particular insight for me in this class was how the 'mock' bravery we have learnt as men, presumably stemming from the 'boys don't cry' conditioning, links with the oppression of people with disabilities. There were no men at the workshop with visible disabilities, apart from those wearing glasses. I saw how hard it is for men to be open with one another about our physical hurts and needs. I have decided to spend time in my Area men's group sharing physical hurts, illnesses and disabilities and supporting each other to make a fuss.

I had decided before the workshop to convene a topic group on being proud to be English, sensing that this is a vital area for us to get to work on. Eight men came and it was very uncomfortable! We began by sharing about where we had grown up or thought of as 'home,' and what about the place we were proud of. It was hard for some of us to feel roots in a particular place, and harder still to know what we were proud of about the places where we had lived. Having felt clear before about my reasons for convening the group, once we met I became very confused and unsafe. It felt as though the goal of uniting around the common experience of being English was impossible. It seemed as though none of us was able to offer enough of a model of pride in being English to contradict the distress of the person working sufficiently for discharge to flow and pride to be reached for. It was clear that each of our experience of being English was vastly different and not one which any one else necessarily identified with, which made it feel very lonely.

We discussed singing an English song; this is where it felt really messy! It became clear that practically any song is perceived quite differently, depending on our background, and that each is restimulating to someone. Distress about class came up very strongly, and apparently (with the focus on our Englishness) in different ways. Each member of the group took time sharing about their family history; it was a start to dare to share the information, but doing it with a note of pride was hard for everyone. Some people just didn't know very much about their family history anyway. We ended sharing something in English history about which we are proud, and some of us found even this impossibly difficult.

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It is clear to me that pride in our Englishness is a VITAL goal, and central to being able to discharge classism and racism, and to becoming effective allies to people of other nationalities, e.g. Welsh, Scottish and Irish, for a start. We need to take pride in every aspect of our particular family and national history. Unless we can do this, we can't take complete pride in ourselves. The residual shame and guilt will prevent us from discharging the distress which keeps us separate from each other and from thinking clearly about the ways it gets reflected in incorrect national policies, e.g. in Ireland. Could the Men's Newsletter have an 'English Men We Are Proud Of' column? It seems as though work on English pride needs to be in a combination of mixed and 'like' groups; attempting to take pride in a mixed group provides restimulation which people can probably work on best by breaking into smaller groups, for example, by class differences. I want to keep working on this -- maybe by having an Area workshop as a next step. . .

The Saturday evening class was devoted to Gay oppression. First Trefor proposed that a heterosexual man should counsel a Gay man in front of the workshop. It quickly became clear that there was too much fear in the way for the heterosexual man, and he worked on this later in the evening. Trefor then counselled the Gay man for a long time. What was excellent about the counselling was that Trefor was entirely relaxed, patient and validating; he continually invited the Gay man to go on, to take more time, to say more; he also simply ignored any dramatisation as though it was not happening.

There seemed to be three distinct phases in the session:

(1) The client feeling disbelief and mistrust of the counsellor, and testing him out with objections, put-downs, etc.;

(2) The client slowly taking the safety to get to his rage about Gay oppression -- about Gay people getting killed and discriminated against, about the injustice of the law, at the feeling of not having the right to exist in the eyes of society. He was able to use the safety of a friendship with an ally in the workshop to get to some of the feelings of blame and reproach which Gay people feel towards non-Gay people for allowing Gay oppression to go on;

(3) The client showing real pride and strength and celebration of his Gayness. The client was continually anxious about taking too much time, and it was important that Trefor got the support of the workshop to encourage the client to go on. Trefor then worked movingly with the ally on taking pride in himself as an ally, pride in his Gay friend and in specific details of their friendship. He then worked with the original counsellor on his homophobia and fear of violence if people were to think he was Gay.

As a Gay person who has been in RC for about seven years said, the whole evening was excellent. Not only was Gay oppression being worked on brilliantly, but it was clear that the work was for men's liberation, not just Gay liberation. A lifetime of feeling not respected by men was powerfully contradicted, actions spoke much louder than words to convey to Gay men that they, too, deserve respect. The next day this work was followed up by a joint section meeting of Gay men and allies. It was a good meeting, though very short, but it was the fact that the meeting HAPPENED which is of such importance. I would like men reading this letter to show it to Gay people they know. I have come away from the workshop with fresh goals for Gay men to get together and support each other well. I would also like to see alliances being made between Gays and Jews. After Saturday evening's demonstrations I worked with a beloved Jewish friend, and the parallels between the oppressions were so clear; particularly the terror and fear of violence, the loneliness and isolation. Gays, like Jews, live with the questions, 'Do they know I'm Gay/Jewish or not?' and 'What will happen if they find out?' I think we could support each other well in working on our internalised oppression.

On Sunday morning Lynn led a class focussing on our relationships with women, and how to counsel on our distress in this area. He worked beautifully with a man on his relationships with women in his life, particularly with his mother. What was well demonstrated was flexible use of the three-step technique. All the elements need to be worked on -- ourselves as oppressed and as allies to women, and on the ways we have hurt women and colluded with sexism. It is not necessary to follow the technique sequentially. It was a difficult class, with people finding it hard to keep their attention out. I think there may have been two reasons for this. After the excitement of the day before when we had been working on getting close to one another, to switch to working on our relationships with women was too sudden . . . Also, the co-leaders of the workshop, Lynn and Trefor, had not specifically taken time in the workshop on feelings about leading, sharing the leadership, rivalry, competition, etc. It seems to me that leaders taking time to discharge feelings about leading is always necessary, for the leader and for the workshop,

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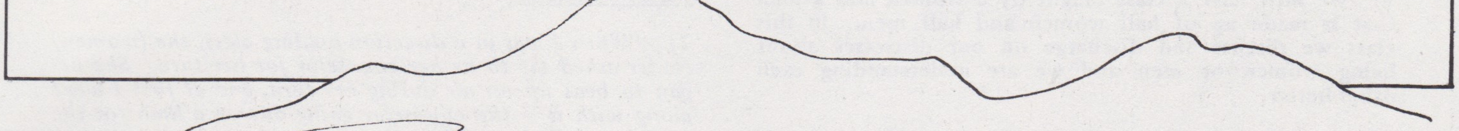
but it is particulary important for leaders of men's events, since rivalry, competition and criticism are particularly male patterns. Not to take time creates a patterned dependency of the workshop membership on the leadership, and opens doors for patterns of resentment and criticism when things are not perfect.

I came away from the workshop thinking about things I would like to see worked on in future workshops and men's groups. Work on fear of violence seems especially important. I remember Lynn working at Bedford and asking people to start with good memories of feeling violent and to enjoy acting into those feelings. I would like to see lots more work done on religion, and not only in topic groups. I suspect that talking about religion and what it means to us is particularly hard for men and that to begin to do so would be very fruitful. We did good work on the newsletter, but I think it showed up how much fear we have of writing. (I have: sitting down to write this account of the workshop was not as easy as it reads!) Writing may not be the best way of communicating our thinking, but it is one very powerful way which can often have far-reaching repercussions, and we should all aim to discharge what makes it hard. Also, I would like to see men doing more work on discharging discharge-inhibiting distresses. If we can have the time and patience to work on what stops us discharging more readily, we are going to move further and faster.

I think the way things have changed so dramatically in the Southern Region over the last few years has a lot to do with the leadership of Lynn and Trefor. Lynn's gentleness and unfailing delight in men and in being with men has meant that we now expect to enjoy being together, to have fun and to get close -- and we do. Trefor offers us a consistent model of joyous optimism; he expects us to aim high and achieve a lot -- and we do. Thanks for another great workshop.

Christopher Spence
London, England



THE MOUNTAIN WALK

Dear beloved client see the mountains, see the view.
    Hey you counselor, why did you take me here? My feet are cold.
Dear beloved client see the glistening, hard frozen falls.
    I never liked being cold.
Dear beloved client watch your breath -- it forms smoke dreams.
    My lips are chapped, my nose is running. How long before we go back?
Dear beloved client here's a tissue and chap stick. Can you see the falls?
    Hey you counselor, you know when I stamp my feet to keep warm I can hear the echo
    in the valley. Helloooo.
Dear beloved client I love you.
    Hey you know the falls are something else and watch the snow swirl in the wind.
    Shucks I shouldda brought my sled.
Dear beloved client, my feet are cold and I can't quite remember why we came here.
    Dear beloved counselor, see the mountains, see the view, the glistening falls . . .

Keith Miller
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

PROBLEM-SOLVING IN THE HONOLULU COMMUNITY:

MEN'S PARTICIPATION

Dear Chuck Esser,

Male participation in our community has always been low, but after our only male teacher resigned in the middle of teaching a male class and took most of the men with him, most of the remaining men in the community were ready to quit.

I felt that this would not be good for our community and organized the remaining men into a support group which produced the "Statement."

The effect of the "Statement" has been positive and has produced the following results:

1) The ARP said that she had done the things mentioned in the "Statement" and had seen other women do the same. She said she and the other women would stop.

2) The men in the community did not leave and our men's support group is growing.

3) We now have a male teacher.

4) We now have a class taught by a woman and a man that is made up of half women and half men. In this class we discuss and discharge on our distresses about being women or men and we are understanding each other better.

5) Our last workshop had about half women and half men in it.

6) Women and men in our community are more understanding and supportive of each other and are working together in ever-increasing harmony.

All of these improvements have taken place in less than a year!

I have also included an outline of goals that were used by our men's support group prior to producing the "Statement."

We have found that a direct approach using written communication has been effective in solving our problems.

. . . I am interested in any comments concerning this . . .

Bill Rand
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

EDITED EXCERPTS FROM THE MEN'S STATEMENT ON MALE PARTICIPATION IN THE HAWAII RC COMMUNITY

Why many men lack enthusiasm for and are reluctant to participate in RC activities:

1) Men in our community feel that they are frequently mistreated and invalidated. Often they are treated as if they represent all the stereotyped oppressive patterns that are characteristic of sexism. This unawareness of the individual man is probably caused by undischarged distress about sexism. The invalidation of men is an attempt to discharge on sexism, but when it is not confined to session, it causes difficulties for everyone. Invalidation doesn't all come from females, but also from men allowing themselves or other men to be invalidated or, because of guilt, invalidating themselves or other men. The solution to this problem is to treat each man as a valuable, unique individual who is treasured for himself and who of course would choose to be an ally.

2) Men are also invalidated by statements that men don't discharge well or that women discharge better. This idea is simply not true. Men discharge just fine. Saying or thinking that they don't at least restimulates the conditioning not to discharge and can make it more difficult by taking their attention away from what they are needing to discharge on and focusing it on worry about their adequacy as a client or counselor. Every man is eager to discharge at any opportunity. If conditioning gets in the way of showing feelings, the teacher can be of great assistance by expecting and communicating that the conditioning can be easily overcome.

Some specific instances where individual men have been invalidated:

1) "When I was in a direction-holding class, the (woman) leader asked me to be her counselor for her turn. She began to beat up on me during her turn, and at first I went along with it -- the counselor going out on a limb for the client and all that. When the pain began to be unbearable, I interrupted her and asked her to stop. She then insisted that it was my duty to let her hurt me, since she had been hurt by men and she needed to do this in session. The other women present supported me, but only after the session."

2) "I made the mistake of calling a woman in our RC class a girl while talking to my RC teacher over the phone. She looked young to me and I had never heard that there was such a clear-cut distinction between the two words. My teacher lost her temper and shouted at me for five minutes about this. This was my first RC class."

3) "At my first men's workshop, while counseling with the male leader, I attempted to counsel on my distress about women, but was immediately directed away from it as though it was a taboo subject."

4) "At an Area Meeting, during a discussion about the problem of a lack of men in the RC community, a co-leader of the leadership class said, "How can we support men when men don't discharge?""

5) "During several sessions I was told that you cannot discharge by hitting a pillow. I questioned this as I had been discharging by hitting a pillow for years. I called a leader to ask her about it and was told that you cannot discharge anger by hitting a pillow or by angry shouting or by violent movements or perspiring, and that when I do this I am only dramatizing. When I read to her from the co-counseling Manual that violent movements, angry shouting and perspiration are ways to discharge anger, she said that the Manual needs to be re-written.

continued . . .

Why this problem has gone on so long:

If a man shows courage or strength, objects to invalidation, or makes verbal mistakes that slide into sexism, support is often withdrawn and he is either ignored or strongly criticized. At other times men's own fears have colluded with women's mistrust of men, and they act like good little boys, out of fear of total rejection or withdrawal of the support that has been offered. Hence, many men have tried to tough it through and have not objected to invalidation. What is needed is neither criticism of men's patterns nor attempts to hide them, but interruption that comes from a position of confidence rather than victimization. If men can be validated and appreciated for who they are, including their real strength and boldness, then the patterned "male arrogance" or "numbness" will melt away and their true power will be seen.

Practical steps:

Now that both females and males are willing to discuss the problem openly, we have already taken the first big step. Next steps include: 1) Understand, discharge on, and solve the problems causing lack of male enthusiasm and participation. 2) Recruit more men. 3) Encourage, support, promote and develop male leaders.

GOALS
MEN AND THE RC COMMUNITY

Our RC community has a problem -- a lack of men. This is not a new problem. There have always been more women in the community than men. Men have also been under-represented in leadership and teaching positions. The community has only produced one male teacher in its entire nine-year history, and he resigned! The current ratio of men and women who co-counsel is now about three to one. The participation of men in community activities is even lower. At the last workshop the ratio was about fifteen to one, and at the Area meeting it was about ten to one, with only one man attending. The situation has become so extreme that if the current trend continues there will soon be no men in the community at all. It is necessary now to take definite action to understand this problem and to solve it while there are still some men left!

The formation of a Men's Support Group is an important move in this direction. In order for the group to be effective it should have some definite goals and purposes. The following is a list of a number of such goals and purposes.

1) That the promotion and support of men and encouragement for men to become leaders and teachers in the community be the primary purpose of the Men's Support Group. This should include support for men already in the community and the recruitment of new men into the community. Our goal should be to have an equal number of men and women in the community and in teaching and leadership positions. This goal is supporteed by proposal six of the Guidelines.

2) We should become aware of the conscious and unconscious invalidation and discouragement that men receive from community members and to develop rational ways to stop it.

3) Strength lies in unity. Therefore, it is important that we agree on what our goals and purposes are. One reason men have not been able to stop the invalidation and discouragement that they receive is a lack of unity, mutual understanding and agreement about how men are treated in the community and what should be done.

4) We should openly discuss how each of us has been treated and how we have felt in the community. We should counsel each other and discharge all the distress we have about this.

5) We should work on our emotional distress concerning women and through emotional discharge free ourselves from the painful patterns that keep us from understanding women clearly and from interacting with them rationally.

6) We should have the attitude that we will succeed and that any emotional distress patterns that each of us has or that other members of the community have that prevent the validation and support of men in the community will be discharged and overcome. Men are powerful; we will succeed.

7) Men should become as fully knowledgeable and informed about RC theory as possible, know and understand the Guidelines and gain a functional use of RC terminology. This is important so that men can communicate effectively with other community members, become leaders or support other men to be leaders, and be effective community members.

This is also important so that men can effectively object to and interrupt hurtful experiences which invalidate men and discourage them from being community members.

8) We should realize that RC theory is continually developing and therefore is not complete or "perfect." However, it has proven to be very workable. Therefore, we should not thoughtlessly malign any part of RC theory or any of its developers or leaders. We should confine distress "about RC" to our sessions, discharge on it, and then actively pursue needed changes or improvements through proper channels. It is important that the men of the community remain in good standing with the entire RC Community if we are to remain stable and powerful and if we are to achieve our goals.

9) We should not take the attitude that the problem revolves around "the men against the women," but that the clear, rational, loving, flexible, emerging sides of both men and women are working together to bring balance, rationality, harmony, and mutual support to male-female interactions within the community. Women are our allies; we are their allies.

10) Men discharge just as well as women. In our culture men are conditioned to hold in some forms of discharge. and women others. It is important that everyone in the community understand this and remain clear about it. It is hurtful and invalidating to say that women discharge better than men or that men have trouble discharging. In addition, it tends to further condition men not to discharge and to think of themselves as inferior counselors and clients and thus reduces their interest in RC. Men discharge just fine.

Bill Rand

REPLY FROM CHUCK ESSER

Dear Bill,

I worked this weekend on the men's journal and spent some time on your letter and articles. I think what you have all done in Honolulu will be very helpful to a number of communities that face similar problems. I lack experi-

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continued . . .

ence with some of the things you mention; the Areas that I have been involved with have always had men in good numbers and in leadership. The women in our Areas have also been careful to separate out their feelings because of the oppression and have not directed them at men in the community. Recently we had a Women and Allies workshop in our region where a number of men were able to go into the workshop and offer themselves as "targets," and we could actually see a number of women through major parts of the internalized oppression. It seems to me that once men get their heads out of the invalidation they have suffered, which actually doesn't take that long, we can do some excellent counseling of women on the oppression by offering ourselves as "targets" and not get drawn into the distresses ourselves.

I particularly appreciate your statements on men and discharge. I know that I and others have given the impression on occasion that "men have difficulty discharging," because many men indicate in workshops that they would like to be able to cry or shake and have never been able to do either in RC. Many of these same men cry or shake listening to favorite records or other things. With some work directly on the conditioned embarrassment and humiliation about showing "weakness," they have always discharged well and have found successful ways to move on their use of sessions. I think what I want to be saying in public about men and discharge is our conditioning makes signs of "weakness" as defined by the culture difficult. This differs from man to man and can be easily discharged. I often initiate a demonstration by asking, "Who here is not discharging the way he wants?" I have successfully asked men to make crying noises or shake with a "burrrrrrr." If the embarrassment or humiliation is too strong for them to discharge heavily from this approach, I have asked them to stop me from shaking or crying as I simulate discharge. Invariably, the client is able to laugh, sweat, etc. and starts unfolding all the invalidations that were directed at him.

Chuck Esser

Winter

The weather turned cold today.

I walk on grass that crackles stiff
under my feet.
My hands stiffen numb and turn white
in the chill.

I remember my father's hands.
He died in the summer.
He didn't notice the weather.

I wish he had held me more.
I wish he had just . . . held me.

And I think about his body's warmth
When the weather turns cold.

Dan Sisco
Wichita, Kansas, USA

CRY? ARE YOU KIDDING?

From the time we're very young, many men are taught to act as if we're in control. This is a wonderful thing to know how to do. It often makes it possible to step right through feelings and to act boldly and bravely. Men are good at that. Also, since many of the situations we find ourselves in are not safe enough for discharge, and it's important to continue to function anyway, it's useful to be able to act as if we're doing just fine even when we feel terrible.

Of course, we are doing fine. We are incredibly powerful and fully capable of being in control. The problem for many men is that we're forced to act as if we're in control when actually we are numb. We aren't or weren't permitted to discharge on the fear and uncertainty we feel. The result can be not genuine control, but a pattern of control that can even make it seem as if our feelings have all but disappeared. We're never scared, rarely embarrassed. And cry? Are you kidding?

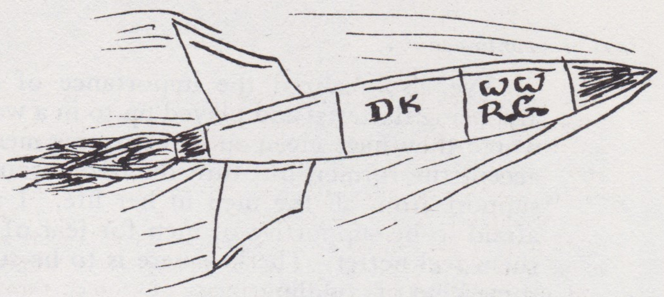
A counselor that thinks creatively about how to jiggle and contradict this control will be an invaluable ally to anyone who may be caught in it.

At the last men's support group we had some successes in thinking about and breaking through control. We began with each of us talking about what we did as young people, how we looked and how we acted when we needed to discharge and weren't allowed to. Then we looked for directions that contradicted any ways we had been forced to act controlled. For each of us the control and the direction required to contradict it was different. Some of us got stubborn and denied the pain, some got silent and withdrew, and others got angry. Whatever the direction out taken, it seemed to be helpful to contradict the control with tone of voice and gestures as well as words. Something that worked especially well was to have the client act completely out of control: to ask for help in our frailest voices, to give up and beg for relief, or just to fall apart like we wanted to when we were three years-old. We were embarrassed to do this which was perfect because it's partly the embarrassment and fear of ridicule that have kept the patterns in place.

With encouragement, good thinking and safety, we can discharge these patterns and feel all the sensitivity, caring and genuine power that is our birthright as men.

Jim Green
(reprinted from the San Francisco, California, USA, newsletter)

Becoming a Women's Liberation Activist



Dear Chuck,

I'm writing to keep in touch with you, and to let you know what I've been doing. I've thought about our contact at the Memorial Day Weekend workshop that you and Charlie led and how wonderful that was. Several people back in San Diego were inspired by my glowing descriptions.

The support group I'm leading is going well. I'm sending you a separate report about that along with this letter. As you can tell, I took a lot of cues from the way you and Charlie structured that weekend men's workshop, particularly in the sequence of topics, starting with working directly on freeing up the discharge process in men, on to homophobia and then sexism. I've also adopted what to me is an expanded concept of what homophobia is, that I picked up at the workshop, as well as some specific counseling ideas (on discharge and male autobiographies.)

My wide world work on men's issues is going well. I'm now on the Board of Directors of the Women's Center at Palomar College where I teach philosophy (I'm the only man on the Board). The director of the Center was in my RC class, and I have a growing friendship with her. I gave a workshop there a few weeks ago especially for men that I called "Everything you always wanted to know about feminism but were afraid to ask." For most people the highlight was when I had the women in the workshop talk about what they liked and what they found difficult about being women, and the men talk about what they liked and what they found difficult in relating to other men. One man there is active in the local Unitarian Church, and he's asked me to come talk there. I had started the workshop by asking everyone to share one thing they already knew about feminism, and asking the men to say something they wanted to know and the women to say something they wanted men to know. I talked about the divisions between men and women and how they get installed, and what can be done to start to undo it. Several men requested further workshops like it.

I've also been one of the principal organizers of a San Diego chapter of a national organization called Men Allied Nationally for the ERA. We've been doing concrete political support work. The most exciting thing was having a booth at the annual conference of the National Organization for Women in Los Angeles a few weeks ago. We were the only booth specifically oriented towards men and had a noticeable impact on the convention. I attended meetings of the men's caucus, and was very excited to see the positive impact I was having on the formulation of policy at a national level. All of the members of our group who went came back really high from the contacts we'd made with men and women at the convention. We'll be following up on many of them.

I've left a men's support group (non-RC) that I'd been a member of for four years. It was no longer functioning as a support group for me, since I was getting much better results in RC. I eased myself out of the group over a long period of time because it was important to me to keep my friendships with the men there. I shared about RC and why it was working for me. I succeeded in leaving the group without leaving the people in it. In addition to sustaining our personal relationships, we're continuing to work together politically, and are getting together with other men to form a man's anti-sexist network in San Diego. One other man who left the group at the same time I did is now in my RC class.

I've learned some interesting things about being an ally from my work in and out of RC. One thing I've noticed is that women whom I'm close to have started to criticize me for being sexist on relatively more subtle things and have gotten quite angry about it. I take this as a sign that I must be doing something right, and that they're feeling safe enough with me to start to get off some of the anger at men that they're carrying. The trick for me here is to work through my feelings that "it's not fair that I'm being attacked for minor things when men who are much worse are getting away with it," and to continue to pay attention to what I'm being told.

continued . . .

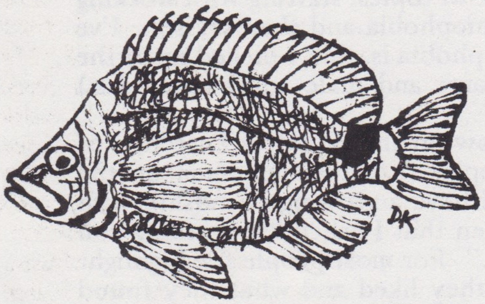
continued . . .

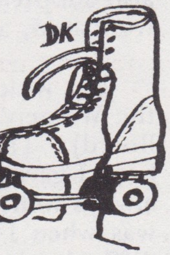
I've also realized the importance of distinguishing between being appreciated as an ally and being flattered and played up to in a way that comes out of women's internalized oppression, where they have given up on expecting men to be there for them. I want to be able to graciously accept the former, but turn the latter around to help the woman regain the confidence to expect support from all the men in her life. I also want to be able to interrupt it when women are afraid to be supportive of men for fear of falling back into giving men pseudo-support to make them feel better. The key here is to be sure that what I'm asking for is human support and not some kind of coddling.

I've been excitedly reading Men. One man I showed it to was astounded by the cover photo showing all those happy men. You and the other men involved have done a fine job of putting it together.

I'll be leading a day-long men's workshop in early December, and co-leading a men's and women's workshop with the leader of the women's support group in early February.

Harry Brod
San Diego, California, USA





MEN IN THE AREAS

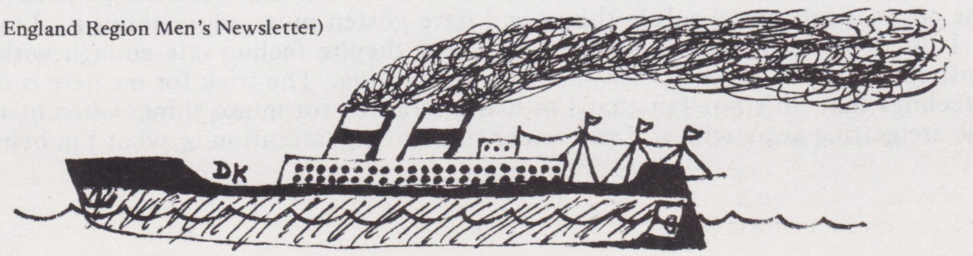
NORTH LONDON (Jim Read): Two bits of news from N. London. . . Liz Martindale led a workshop for women and men combatting sexism, assisted by me. About three men and eight women were there and it was very successful. Highlights were Liz doing demonstrations with a woman taking pride and a man using the three-step technique. Lynn is teaching a men's support group, assisted by me. We focus on relations with other men, and with women, on alternate months. Some of the sessions have been very good indeed. . . With the women's support group starting up again in the autumn, sexism in N. London has never been under such strong attack. . . Are patterns an endangered species?

BRIGHTON AND LEWES (Greg Tuthill): A lot has happened with the men in the Brighton/Lewes counselling group since I last saw you at Bristol. Although there is not yet a men's support group, there are a number of men emerging and participating in counselling classes and workshops. . . This does not mean to say that we as men are not working on issues that are related to men's re-emergence--the continual warmth and support we show each other certainly strengthens the reality that as men we are becoming increasingly aware and stronger and safe to be with, both in and out of counselling situations. . I will be more certain by the next issue of the newsletter about the way things are going towards an effective men's support group and related issues, but until then you may be reassured that the Brighton/Lewes men are not stagnating--merely re-emerging. . . .

(reprinted from the So. England Region Men's Newsletter)

DEVON AND CORNWALL (Bill Bachle): We have a monthly support group of ten men in an area of thirty-eight, covering Exeter, Plymouth, and Cornwall. . . The last Area Day Workshop for men and women was successful in letting new RC men hear the theory and see women working on their oppression. The men split off to work on pride in their manhood and the three-step technique. . . No plans yet for a Men's Day, but one should evolve from the support group. . . I, as leader, am attending the regular Men's Days in London to assure I get the appropriate help . . .(Later letter) The men's support group has had a couple of meetings, eight men attending, including two men aged eleven and thirteen--working class men, middle class men, and upper middle class men. The first meeting was nervous, the second more relaxed, the men getting down to some good work and more than a few laughs. We meet monthly. . . Bob Bachle and Ben Bachle (the young men mentioned above) recently attended Gill Turner's European Young Leaders' Weekend in Hampshire, giving a moving report to our on-going class, of which they form a vibrant part. Two male leaders of the present and future!

HERTS., BEDFORD, AND BUCKS (Richard Harrison): We has a series of men's support group meetings last winter and spring, culminating in a one-day workshop. . . This autumn we are meeting monthly and intend to see each other clearly and support each other effectively in our determination to function as fully human men in the wide world. I shall lead the class, assisted by my strong, loving, sharp friend, John Kelly.



FROM A MALE A.R.P.

After being an Area Reference Person for over a year and a half, I am finally beginning to feel proud about the kind of leadership I am offering to this community. I am becoming a solid leader, particularly in these areas: initiating growth in areas where the community is weak and encouraging people with an inclination to pick up responsibility in those areas; pushing the growth and development of new leaders; getting tough and saying no when necessary; holding the line firmly on policy questions and the guidelines; seeking out other peoples' thinking on problems; and thinking comprehensively about the community, from literature sales and finances to a men's class, rather than just thinking about what is easy for me to think about.

I started a men's support group before Christmas, which Scudder is leading with me. It promises to be good and solid. I have learned the difference between classes that look flashy and exciting but don't produce long-term results and ones which may appear slow and less dramatic but in which the commitment exists for long-term growth. I have been encouraging and meeting with a parent's support group. I've had feelings about leading it, since I am not a parent. But it's become clear to me that people in it need good, tough counseling and that I can model that.

The first class for our leaders' class, which Susan and I are co-teaching, will start next week. I had to tell some eager-beavers they couldn't be in it and why, which stretched me a lot. I'm thinking of wearing a button or putting a sign up in my room which says, "The buck stops here." It's really good for me to have to do that, makes me sweat. I am starting to see peoples' authority material as material, instead of taking it all personally. I anticipate getting to the point where I can say very firmly, "no," and still be very much there for the person. That is what I want. That is going to be a huge step for me, particularly in relation to men.

Last night I gave the introduction for a men's fundamentals class that I am going to be teaching. Just walking into the room felt like shut-down, with everyone sitting around with serious expressions. I was shaking and sweating halfway through the talk, but I kept myself on track and my assistant, John, said I came through beautifully. The feeling I had while being there was "men are my people." I felt full of love for them, even when I knew the room I had to operate in was limited because I'd scare them if I tried to hug them or anything like that. So I didn't. I communicated as much warmth and caring as I could from across the room. I think it is going to be very easy to feel a strong commitment to them, partly because I've worked hard to get them together.

When is it appropriate simply to tell someone where you see his distresses operating and that he should cut it out? I always remember being told that it doesn't help someone to have their material pointed out to them. I am thinking particularly of some men in this community -- fine people, but they often act in ways that are very irresponsible. One man goes around sulking for days, waiting for someone to pull him out; he gives R. a hard time for going to the women's workshops because he gets restimulated when she does "women's things." B. hasn't paid me for a class he was in a year and a half ago; he also says he'll be at a certain place to counsel and then doesn't show. He dropped out of the leaders' class without telling me or saying why or paying for the classes he came to. I need to get tougher, but I don't yet know how. I'm afraid that I will just dump on them, or invalidate them. Underneath it, I'm angry. I see their distresses clearly, and I also see them clearly a lot of the time. I feel like I need permission to go ahead and do something, along with some suggestions for guidelines or limits.

In general, men have a hard time sticking with RC in this community. I see women come into RC and in no time at all there are half a dozen women friends around them, in and out of RC, supporting them, encouraging them, being there for them. In comparison to this, men are extremely isolated. Marriages have been breaking up in our community -- three or four in the past two years. Invariably the woman leaves, finds lots of women friends, work to do, does lots of heavy discharging about what she's lost, and goes on full swing with life. The men feel very alone, very lost, flounder around, then find a woman they can be dependent on and who will be dependent on them, and start over. I've seen it plenty of times. I have put out a lot of time and energy in these situations, counseling both the men and the women. Typically the women opt for growing and the men close up. One man continued counseling but his material was too troublesome to be in a class. I sensed a need to come down hard on him, but didn't know how and was too scared.

As I think about this problem, most of it is in relation to men. There is a need for something new here -- new to me at any rate -- a kind of toughness . . .

Stephen Parker
St. Johnsbury, Vermont, USA

Rational Businesses

I have written this reply to B.J. Spice's questions in **Men No. 1**. *He asked if we in RC could begin to serve as models by starting rational businesses; what they would consist of, and how they would survive in this society.*

Marc P. Saikin
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

As a business person, I have found that rational businesses exist in our society in almost every industry, though outnumbered by traditional distressed businesses. I have also observed that most rational businesses tend to be smaller companies, under twenty-five people, though not exclusively. The following are some of our goals and attitudes in creating and running our business:

1) Economic viability—No business, rational or otherwise, can function without this.

2) That people earn enough money so they don't have to worry about it.

3) That people be validated for doing a good job and corrected in a loving manner if need be. That validation, correction, and communication flow both up and down the organization (i.e., a secretary may confront a manager for sloppy or poor work). That people not oppress others within the company. That people be empowered to be responsible and experience achievement. Recently we were doing a large-scale mailing and our secretary took responsibility for its completion. Even though I am a leader in the business, I took direction from her and was responsible to her.

4) That careful thought be given to matching people to jobs. If someone wants to leave our company, they are not just dumped, but are supported in finding a better situation.

5) Fairness—We are thinking of instituting a profit-sharing plan that each person employed by the business shares in equally, regardless of salary. Each person contributes in many ways, often unseen and unnoticed, to profits. This profit-sharing plan is in place of a retirement plan (anybody who spends their work life at our business deserves a dignified retirement income).

We reject any notions of guilt. We do not think that businesses are intrinsically evil or bad. As each of us re-emerges, businesses will also emerge in a more human form.

What makes our business satisfying is a commitment by each person to allow others to grow. We see the business as more than just a method for making money. Our business is like a community to us, a place to express our creativity and productivity in an atmosphere of safety. This is not always easy, given cultural conditioning.

Work is a rational human need. I would like to see other businesses allow work to be as satisfying as it is intrinsically. I would like to invite others with experience in rational businesses and other rational work environments to write and share their observations, thoughts, and actions.

reprinted from *Present Time*

One of my many triumphs in counseling and in my life is my work and involvement with men. I have a commitment to the "rebirth and liberation of all the men in the world" and I really have a sense of my ability to make that happen. I just completed my first men's fundamentals class this summer and I plan to start another this fall. But what's even more exciting is that I'm really starting to see the effect I have on men in the world. Once again, I feel like I'm just beginning to get glimpses of what it can be like, but it's enough to let me know I'm headed in the right direction. Most exciting recently have been the effects of my humanness and my sense of humor at my workplace (I'm a carpenter) and the fact that a man friend of mine who works in a factory recently asked me if he could be in my class this fall. I never pushed him, *I just made friends.* I'm learning, and the "shoulds" and "have to's" and panic about "things not going fast enough" are beginning to fade.

Mac Parker
Burlington, Vermont, USA

. . . Recently the word "dispensible," in regard to men, jumped out at me from a page of **Re-evaluation Sisters**. *Also, in the Revised Draft of the Policy Statement it says, "A group could lose many men—and still survive—as long as there were women to bear children; thus a large group of women, but small groups of men, could repopulate; the difficulty is apparent if the reverse is true."*

I began wondering what it would be like to grow up and be treated as dispensible—maybe not so much in the early years, but with the idea of reaching manhood in order to be sent to the hunt or be sent to do battle with enemies.

A recent article I read mentioned the castration of domestic male animals (and of course those are the ones raised for slaughter) in regard to the way males are seen as dispensible in the culture. Not disregarding the qualitative difference between humans and animals, it may be an indication of human male conditioning that brought him to this decision about male animals.

Anyhow, it was an interesting thought to me. Perhaps it has already been writiien up in **Men**, *but I have not seen it. . . .*

Sara Bittinger
Manchester, Indiana, USA

(Excerpt from a letter to Kathy Miller by Marty Manley)

It was important for you to contradict my stuff around death by saying that you wanted me to live. As ridiculous as it may sound, many men live ready (and half-expecting) to die at a moment's notice. We are taught this when we are quite young (war games, for instance). It is reinforced constantly ("women and children first"), and we do in fact give up our lives with given regularity (as evidenced by the statistic you pointed out, that although there are more males born than females, fewer men live to reproduce).

Apparently conditions in our past made this attitude useful. It still has some value, since contradicting old fears feels enough like dying that being willing to die is an advantage of sorts. It's probably rational to be willing to die fighting for things that are important, although in practice it's usually more effective to live for a cause than to die for it. The difficulty for many men is the general expectation that we will die, which many of us internalize.

CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN WOMEN & MEN

A clearer understanding is beginning to emerge of the nature of the inherent relationships between women and men, the cultural distresses that get in the way of these natural relationships, and what can be done about removing the distresses through counseling. Some of the confusions in this area are beginning to be challenged and some dependable guides for counseling well on these distresses are beginning to be found.

Advances began in recent months as an attempt to solve a counseling problem for a woman RC leader who felt incapable of attracting, getting acquainted with, and establishing good relationships with men. In the results and follow-up of the counseling, broader issues came to light and are still emerging. The following is a state-of-progress report on what reality seems to have been uncovered in the area of women/men relationships until now.

The *appearances* in our cultures are that women and men find it almost impossible to relate to each other on an intelligent, mutually-respectful, loving, human basis with any consistency or over any long period of time. Most enduring relationships seem to be ones that involve a great deal of pattern and oppression, including dominance and submission, etc.

THE INHERENT REALITY

The reality is that women and men are inherently disposed toward excellent, enjoyable relations with each other and only patterns get in the way of such excellent relationships.

ALL WOMEN ARE INHERENTLY INTERESTED IN AND EAGER TO BE CLOSE FRIENDS WITH ALL MEN. ALL MEN ARE INHERENTLY INTERESTED IN AND EAGER TO BE CLOSE FRIENDS WITH ALL WOMEN. Every woman apparently is inherently attracted to every man, and every man attracted to every woman.

Why this is so is in part "obvious" (to any RC'er) and in part is still the subject of speculation. We have known for a long while that human beings love human beings, and, to a woman, *men are human beings*; to a man, *women are human beings*. The general principle, "Love is the way human beings naturally feel about each other . . ." is the foundation of this attractiveness between the two genders.

I speculate that there is also an inherent interest *because of our differences*, that women always seem fascinating to men because they are different from themselves, and men also seem fascinating to women because of the difference. Some people disagree with me vociferously on this and insist that any special attraction must be patterned, but I do not think so. I think that in addition to the general attraction between humans there is probably a special inherent bond of attractiveness between the two genders.

The importance of the oppression of sexism as a barrier to, and destroyer of, these excellent inherent relationships between women and men has at least begun to be explored. Most RC'ers are now aware that sexism is enforced upon both males and females very early in their lives and that the enforcement itself installs a hurt which keeps the sexist pattern in place, either in the role of enforcer or in the role of victim. We have become at least somewhat aware of the pressures of the sexist conditioning on women to submit, propitiate, appease, withdraw, isolate themselves, and upon men to dominate, enforce, and oppress.

CONDITIONED MALE DEPENDENCE

What we have not, until now, taken as aware account of, is the pressures on men which reinforce the sexism but also act independently to throw up barriers between them and women. Males are not only taught to "look down upon" or "lord it over" or "feel superior to" females, but they are also taught to regard them as the only possible source of human attention, warmth, caring, touch and human concern. Since the "big boy" and the homophobia conditioning bars males from expecting or turning to other males for any of this warmth, all of us males grow up with the usually unfaced but clear impression that only from women can we receive any comfort, warmth, or humanness.

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(This conditioning is under attack in our men's work in RC. Men should be able to share warmth with each other fully, but the conditioning is deep and, in the wide world, almost fully operational.)

This places within each female's hands (although she is often or usually unaware of it) an enormous power over males which males are subject to, even though they are usually unable to think about it or question it. This is the power of *rejection. All males in our culture live in terror of rejection by females.* If an adolescent boy goes against his embarrassment and fear enough to ask an adolescent girl to dance with him at a school dance she need only (frightened herself) toss her head and say, "Not you!" to have him plunged into an abyss of total rejection.

(His way of countering the rejection may mask what happened, as he resorts to counter-rejection, sexist language or wandering off by himself alone, but the effect is basically rejection and it is very heavy. Each such experience of rejection or, later, even anticipated rejection, adds to the vulnerability.)

ANYONE SHE WANTS TO

Any woman can attract any man she wishes to have as a good, close friend and can keep that relationship permanently if she is able to do three things:

1) Think of herself as worthwhile, likeable and attractive and communicate to the man that she has this attitude toward herself by look, posture, facial expression, tone of voice or words,

2) Indicate to the man that she finds him interesting, attractive, and desirable as a friend, and

3) Communicate to the man that he is not in danger of being personally rejected by her.

A woman who can do this is irresistible to any man. Cosmetics, clothes, figure, complexion, all the other supposed ingredients of attractiveness, have very little to do with the attraction which a man feels for her (they do have a bearing on patterned attraction, of course, but that's another story), compared to the deep inherent attractiveness of a woman who can communicate these three things.

To do this will generally require that a woman do considerable discharging. In the demonstrations that have been done at workshops so far, the thought of deliberately being attractive brings much laughter and shaking and tears as the invalidations that she is "not attractive enough," which have apparently been placed on nearly every woman, are contradicted and discharged. Yet in our experience so far, even a small amount of discharge seems to make a great deal of difference in the woman's handling of her male environment. It seems clear at this point that any woman can have as many good male friends as she wishes simply by discharging enough to achieve this three-pronged attitude.

A fear that is always immediately raised is, "What do I do with them once I have attracted them?' with the woman apparently visualizing a host of the usual sexist attitudes which men are conditioned to turn toward women, converging upon her.

A RELIEF FOR MEN

I think it's first necessary to state clearly that none of us men like acting that way. A few of us are so deeply conditioned that it will take intensive counseling to break us out of it, but in general we have simply grown up being told and accepting that only an aggressive, "I'm only interested in sex and that right now" attitude is really manly or impressive enough to gain us a woman's interest. Very few of us ever succeed in acting as we think we're supposed to, and most of us feel disappointed in ourselves, but all of us have been convinced that this is what women want and expect. We were told this by the culture, by our contemporaries, by the older boys, by all the male models in the male magazines and movies. So we compulsively do our best to live up to this nonsense, even though for most of us it is a hateful, diffident activity in which we feel very unsuccessful. For all except a very few of us, a firm, clear statement by a woman as to *what she wants*, which excludes that activity on our part, will be a great relief and will bring great relaxation in our attitudes and great appreciation of the woman for "taking us off the hook" of our patterned conditioning.

To have a large number of warm, close male friends certainly provides the background for any woman to choose with much more freedom any additional relationships which she wishes to establish. She is in a much better position to choose a lover, husband, co-parent, business partner or whatever if she can choose from among her numerous warm, close, mutually-respecting male friendships.

MEN, TOO

What about the man? Can a man achieve warm, close friendships with any woman with whom he wishes to? In my opinion, yes. It's a little harder for me to be completely clear about this since I grew up inside male conditioning and am still affected by it. My picture here is not quite as crystal clear as it can be as a male looking thoughtfully at the situation of women from the outside, but I think, yes, that any woman would welcome relating to any man who:

1) Thought well of himself as a man, was delighted that he was male, was proud of it and showed it by posture, facial expression, tone of voice, words, etc.;

2) Indicated that he liked the woman *as a human being* first and foremost (though the door might be open to the possibility of other relationships);

3) Treated the woman with complete respect, was "decent" in every way.

I have not met a woman (I am not talking about certain patterns here) that would not be delighted to have such a man for a friend, and my own experiences as a man would bear this out.

Apologizing for being sexist has often been the opening gambit for RC men in trying to communicate their decency to RC women. Perhaps one such apology does not hurt, but to continue with an apologetic attitude is in itself patterned. Self-respect is an essential feature of attractiveness.

SPELL OUT THE RELATIONSHIP

The content of any relationship needs to be spelled out clearly and completely and agreed to by both parties. (See the article by Tim Jackins in *PRESENT TIME* No. 43, page 3.) In my opinion the spelling-out in the beginning of a relationship between a woman and a man needs to be done first and firmly *by the woman.* This is in order to counter the sexist conditioning of male dominance that otherwise will tend to intrude continually. If a woman has attracted and struck up a beginning relationship with a man, I think it is her responsibility to think out, and spell out in detail, exactly what she wants the relationship with that man to be and to communicate it to him. If he does not agree to it, then she should not accept the relationship. She should simply say and insist that it is necessary that he accept her terms for the friendship to be an operative one. Dramatized protest from the man can be expected to occur, but holding to a firm postion by the woman, declining to temporize with the patterns but staying friendly with the person, will see the man very relievedly come around in almost every case, in my opinion.

AVOID REJECTION

If the man does not come around, then the woman should postpone any relationship but *not reject the person.* In other words, she should say that she would like to have him for a friend, and when he changes his mind she will be glad to talk to him again. She should say clearly that it isn't him she doesn't like, but only his unreasonable attitudes which she cannot accept without injuring her self-respect and which he will be far better off without. She should hold out the possibility, if he changes his position later, of then accepting him as a friend, so that his terror of rejection does not come into play.

A woman will be pulled by her own distress to compromise on her own best thinking (that is, submit in an old patterned way) or else reject the man, as the only two alternatives that have been open to her in the patterned culture. To avoid either of these two alternatives is, I think, to guarantee her having life-long male friends.

continued . . .

continued . . .

Similarly, clearly thinking out and communicating the conditions of a relationship is necessary for men, but I think the initiative in spelling-out the conditions of a woman-man relationship must lie with the woman in order to contradict the sexist conditioning around them.

DISCHARGE, NOT JUST DISCUSSION

Insights, however valuable, are never enough. It takes action, in this case effective counseling, to effect permanent changes. How can we counsel well in these areas?

The approach of asking a woman client to silently "attract" a male counselor has always brought voluminous discharge whenever I have tried it. I would guess that a male counselor, while convenient, is probably not necessary, that a female counselor would probably work well, too, if it were agreed that she is to be regarded as a "man" during the session. The converse will probably work for men, also.

For a man or woman client to take complete pride in being a man or woman is very effective at bringing discharge. In my experience this requires some boldness on the part of the counselor in modeling well the ways in which he or she expects the client to express this pride. Here posture, facial expression and tone of voice become much more important than words. In fact, I have found that words are best kept to a minimum, such as "*I* am a woman!" or "I am *all man*" in order that attention be focused on the tones, etc.

Both in modeling this and in observing the client, the counselor needs to watch out for the pull to settle for defensiveness, or condescension, or "better than" attitudes rather than real, self-appreciating pride. "Head high but chin in."

I conjecture that we need discussions by women of exactly what attractive, permanently enjoyable attitudes and behavior by men would be like, and by men of what they really would appreciate, long-range, in women's behavior and attitudes, and then a respectful communication by each group to the other (perhaps before an entire workshop).

Perhaps a randomly-chosen pair could model, before a workshop or support group or class, the "spelling-out" of exactly what expectations they will be placing on members of the other gender whom they will meet in the future.

ONLY A BEGINNING

These, in short summary, are some of the developments and thinking that have emerged in the last 8 or 10 International Workshops. They are certainly only the beginning of an ongoing development, and one that many people have indicated great interest in.

I would be glad to hear from readers about this: somewhat interested to hear your thinking and speculations; but very eager to hear of your concrete experiences in systematically counseling and discharging in this area.

— *Harvey Jackins*

(Reprinted from
PRESENT TIME No. 45)

David Keller

Peter Martynowich

B. J. Spice

POEM

1. Daddy, I'm well.
And though the years have made leaving
into becoming, eager footsteps
on my earth,
I still do remember you.

2. For years wind whistled into the hole
where your life was cut from mine,
like the raw air of a February morning
against teeth and lungs.
But finally my arms stopped holding an absence.
They dared to close, embracing
themselves, and the parts became whole again.

Green has returned ten times,
defying an illusion of permanent winter, an illusion
of life as an accident, as a shape
the wind assumes with dry leaves for a moment,
as an interlude between performances of nothing.

Each time on a bed in someone's arms
saying in herks and jerks Daddy don't leave me
I have finished with the feeling of grass
under my feet, the sun
thawing at my face, assuring
that the universe is essentially life,
that to exist and roll through darkness
is also to breathe
and experience love.

3. There is a picture of me, still sixteen,
birthday-fresh, on the day your breath
came slower and slower, like a train
which had left hours before, arriving
somewhere.
There we all are.
There was one last huff into the air, probably,
but it was lost as we returned to ourselves
and the touch of familiar hands and
familiar faces.

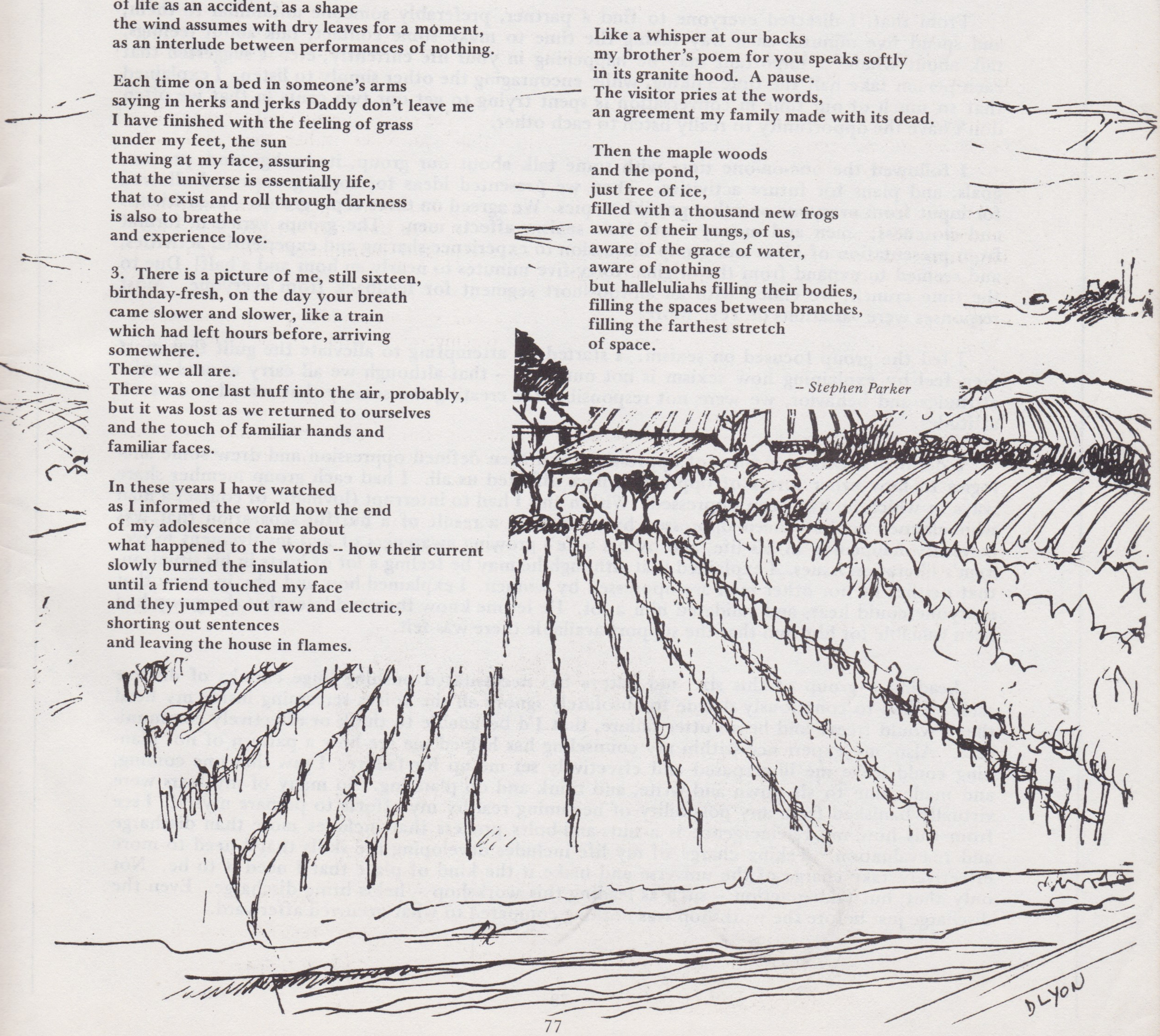
In these years I have watched
as I informed the world how the end
of my adolescence came about
what happened to the words -- how their current
slowly burned the insulation
until a friend touched my face
and they jumped out raw and electric,
shorting out sentences
and leaving the house in flames.

4. I've gone back to the hill behind our farmhouse
to the last day when friends drove you up.
Look at it all.
A few moments
of hill and valley yawning out below you
like an imprisoned land of sleep.
What a bright hard fire
must have burned in you. Stoked in the car,
your motionless dance of thanks
must have heated the metal
crimson at the seams.
It was then that you said good-bye to each particle of us,
and to what our eyes see when we come
countless times, to the hilltop
to show a friend or to renew an acquaintance
ourselves.

Like a whisper at our backs
my brother's poem for you speaks softly
in its granite hood. A pause.
The visitor pries at the words,
an agreement my family made with its dead.

Then the maple woods
and the pond,
just free of ice,
filled with a thousand new frogs
aware of their lungs, of us,
aware of the grace of water,
aware of nothing
but hallelujahs filling their bodies,
filling the spaces between branches,
filling the farthest stretch
of space.

– Stephen Parker



A NON-RC MEN'S WORKSHOP

In connection with the Rochester Men's Conference Planning Committee, I recently led an evening workshop for men. Judging by the responses of the men present, it was a great success. About twenty men participated, four of whom had responded to an item in the Communiversity catalog and the rest from one-to-one contact. Although many of the men there knew someone else, most men were also unfamiliar with many of the other participants. This did not seem to diminish the safety felt throughout the evening.

We began the evening with some play. Dan Morris and Carl Paulsen led some games that brought us into physical contact, encouraged a great deal of laughter, and really helped everyone feel much more relaxed. Play was a great way to start, too, because men arriving late could be quickly included and avoid the awkwardness that can happen when walking in on people talking.

From that, I directed everyone to find a partner, preferably someone unfamiliar to them, and spend five minutes each way taking the time to make some contact, talk about feelings, talk about whatever important may be happening in your life currently, etc. I suggested that each person take half the time talking, while encouraging the other simply to listen. I explained that so much of our time in conversation is spent trying to get our two cents in that we often don't have the opportunity to really listen to each other.

I followed the one-on-one time with some talk about our group, its background, process, goals, and plans for future activities. Then we presented ideas for topic groups and allowed for input from everyone on other possible topics. We agreed on three topic groups -- men friends and closeness; men and money; and how sexism affects men. The groups varied in format from presentation of ideas and group discussion to experience-sharing and experiential activities, and seemed to expand from the original forty-five minutes to nearly an hour and a half! Due to the time crunch, we ended with an all-too-short segment for feedback from everyone. Most responses were variations of Yes! More!

I led the group focused on sexism. I started by attempting to alleviate the guilt that most men feel by explaining how sexism is not our fault -- that although we all carry around sexist attitudes and behavior, we were not responsible for creating the society that reared us in such attitudes.

I defined sexism as a form of oppression, and then defined oppression and drew some analogies to how other forms of oppression have affected us all. I had each group member share ways in which he had been oppressed. Within this I had to interrupt (lovingly, of course) a man who claimed to have been oppressed by women as a result of a hurtful separation that was currently happening in his life, and by his wife's growing awareness of and involvement in women's liberation issues. I explained that although he may be feeling a lot of hurts in his situation, that neither he nor other men are oppressed by women. I explained how and why in a way that everyone could hear, and validated him a lot. He let me know then and later that the group had been valuable for him and that the support available there was felt.

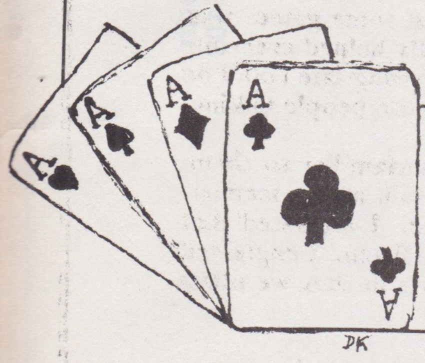
Leading a group of this size and nature has necessitated pushing huge chunks of distress aside. I had to consciously decide to absolutely ignore all the voices screaming inside my head that I would freeze and be an utter failure, that I'd be unable to think or effectively communicate. Also, my experience within my counseling has helped me see how a pattern of not planning could leave me ill-prepared and effectively set me up for failure. I saw that one coming, and made time to sit down and write, and think and do planning. So many of my fears were virtually banished from any possibility of becoming real by my efforts to prepare myself. I see from this how my re-emergence is a nuts-and-bolts process that includes more than discharge and re-evaluation. Taking charge of my life includes developing the skills that I need to more effectively take charge of the universe and make it the kind of place that I need it to be. Not only that, but taking action -- such as leading this workshop -- helps bring discharge. Even the discharge just before the workshop was nothing compared to what occurred afterward.

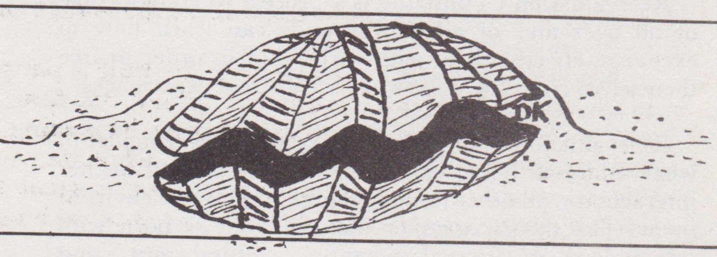
continued . . .

In addition to thanking myself for excellent thinking, communicating, and direction-holding, and the other men in the planning group for their work and time, I especially want to thank Guruseva Mason for his thoughtful, loving support and for ignoring the distress and believing in me!

I received a call today from a seventh grade teacher who is seeking a man to come and speak with her students about sexism and about male roles and conditioning. I decided to accept the challenge, and I'm excited about doing it, in spite of all the distress and restimulation. Judging from current performances, I'm sure to do an excellent job.

Michael Brisson
(reprinted from Rochester Re-evaluation Counseling Area I Newsletter, Rochester, New York, USA)





ACTIVELY ENDING SEXISM

I want to share with you one major way co-counseling has facilitated changing my life, and some successes I have had as a result.

When I began co-counseling, I believed intellectually in equal rights for women, but had no concept of oppression at all. After much discharge I have internalized the oppression theory to the point where I view oppression as an operative reality in our culture, and some time ago found myself actively wanting to end the oppression of all people and seeing how I could participate actively in ending the oppression of women. What happened next was fascinating. It turned out that fear of what would happen to me if I became an activist was cluttering my thinking and ability to act. When I contemplated public action I could visualize losing my family, my profession, my friends and all other kinds of scary stuff. I co-counseled on some of this, but mainly I have acted.

Following a trial where the judge had given jury instructions containing gender-biased language, I wrote to him and critiqued his language. He wrote back to let me know he had talked over my comments with his wife and would pay attention to this in the future (a small but nice victory). I still shake a little when I think of writing to him and all the repercussions I was afraid would follow.

When my former office was looking for an associate two and a half years ago, I agreed to do all the screening interviews. In talking to the placement people at the three law schools in which I interviewed, I made a special point of encouraging women applicants. In my office, at the same time, I created an atmosphere that eliminated or dampened the most blatant sexist acts. The result was that I interviewed forty applicants, screened down to six (three women and three men) and we hired the most qualified person as the ninth associate in the office. (It turned out to be a woman, a real breakthrough in our level of practice at the time.)

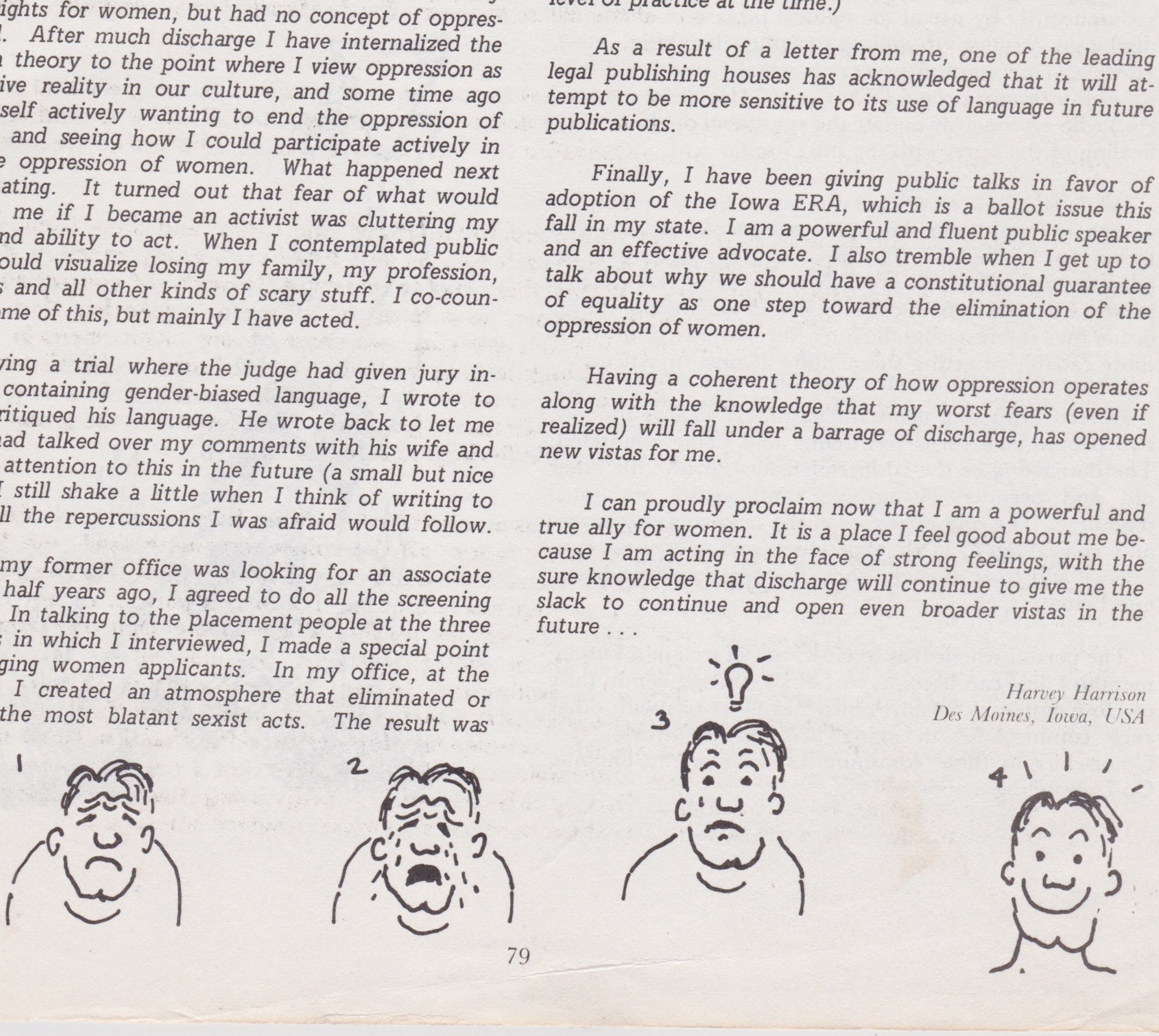
As a result of a letter from me, one of the leading legal publishing houses has acknowledged that it will attempt to be more sensitive to its use of language in future publications.

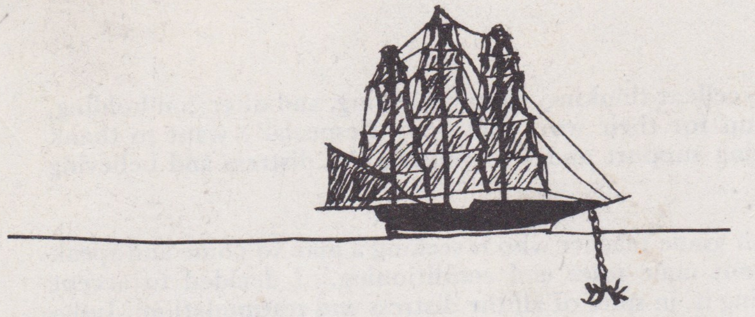
Finally, I have been giving public talks in favor of adoption of the Iowa ERA, which is a ballot issue this fall in my state. I am a powerful and fluent public speaker and an effective advocate. I also tremble when I get up to talk about why we should have a constitutional guarantee of equality as one step toward the elimination of the oppression of women.

Having a coherent theory of how oppression operates along with the knowledge that my worst fears (even if realized) will fall under a barrage of discharge, has opened new vistas for me.

I can proudly proclaim now that I am a powerful and true ally for women. It is a place I feel good about me because I am acting in the face of strong feelings, with the sure knowledge that discharge will continue to give me the slack to continue and open even broader vistas in the future . . .

Harvey Harrison
Des Moines, Iowa, USA





MEN
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Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Don't be a sissy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

The person who learns to Co-Counsel well in a Fundamentals Class can become part of an existing community of Co-Counselors locally which has close ties with other such communities in many parts of the world. Co-Counselors in these communities share many ongoing Co-Counseling activities.